

THOUSANDS MARCH AGAINST RACISM >>Pages 4&5

ASYLUM DETAINEES SPEAK OUT >>Pages 10&11



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CAMERON SAYS HE'LL STEP DOWN AFTER SECOND TERM

GO NOW AND TAKE YOUR POSH MATES WITH YOU!



by SADIE ROBINSON

FOR DAVID Cameron, being prime minister for a third term “might just be too many”. For many ordinary people, having him as prime minister for one term is more than enough.

The arrogant millionaire made his comments while swaggering about in one of his fancy kitchens for the BBC.

Cameron assumes it's up to him, not voters, when he leaves Downing Street. As

one spokesperson put it, Cameron “is clear he will serve a full second term”.

And he has the gall to attack benefit claimants for their “culture of entitlement”.

Cameron suggested that other Tories, such as Theresa May or Boris Johnson, could take over from him.

But whichever Tory is leader, the war on workers will go on unless there is some real resistance.

The Tories have driven down workers' living standards since they sneaked into

office in 2010. Cameron's comments came just days after chancellor George Osborne delivered yet another budget attacking ordinary people.

If the Tories are elected in May it won't be because people like what they are doing. It will be because Labour has failed to inspire them with any real alternative.

We want Cameron out now—and all his posh mates. But we should also demand more than the “austerity-lite” on offer from the Labour Party.

HILLSBOROUGH

Police failings 'caused fans' deaths'

POLICE FAILED to stop a dangerous buildup of fans in the run-up to the Hillsborough football disaster, inquests have heard.

Policing expert Douglas Hopkins gave evidence to fresh inquests into the disaster last week. Some 96 Liverpool fans were killed due to the 1989 disaster.

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INTERNATIONAL



Protests as rulers try to beat Greece

THOUSANDS protested outside European Central Bank offices in Frankfurt amid a standoff between the Greek government and Europe's rulers.

The Greek government is struggling to pay wages. But European institutions are refusing to release the bailout money they agreed.

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CLEANERS

Migrant workers revolt over poor conditions

MIGRANT WORKERS at a number of London's universities are fighting to improve their terms and conditions.

Cleaners at the universities are campaigning to drive up pay and strengthen union organisation.

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THE THINGS THEY SAY

'What a f***** knob'

Labour MP Simon Danczuk explains what people think of Ed Miliband

'I am not having a go at Ed Miliband'

Labour MP Simon Danczuk clarifies

'He seems a very charming man, but absolutely terrifying'

Tory MP Anna Soubry on the Scottish National Party's Alex Salmond

'His arrogance and contempt for the English taxpayer is staggering'

The Daily Mail gets on the anti-Salmond bandwagon

'Mating signals would be absolutely fatal'

Tory London mayor Boris Johnson says the Tories shouldn't form a coalition

'Any young Muslim would be affected'

Labour's John Prescott accepts wars lie behind 'radicalisation' of Muslims

'He can't be f***** everywhere'

A Lib Dem aide on Nick Clegg's latest failure to keep an appointment with the queen



The Tory, the racists and the plot for fake demonstration

THE TORY candidate accused of plotting with the racist English Defence League (EDL) said he was using the same tactics that the British army deployed against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Afzal Amin resigned as Tory candidate after he was caught on tape conspiring with the EDL to plan a "fake" demonstration.

Some 27 hours of meetings took place with Tommy Robinson, the allegedly former EDL leader, and Steve Eddowes, the group's current chief.

Amin reportedly attempted to persuade the racist group to pretend to plan but then call off a demonstration against a new local mosque. This was so that he could claim credit for defusing the situation.

Amin insisted that his plan was "altruistic, community service work".

He claimed he told the cops what he was up to. The cops say he didn't. He said he was set up by the EDL goons. Perhaps. Among the many oddities was the reappearance of Tommy Robinson.

He previously gained publicity claiming he had left the EDL because it was racist. He now gains publicity by secretly filming a Tory who, according to the ever reliable Robinson, was "trying to use us."

Meanwhile when the EDL showed up in Dudley for a real march the good people of the town protested for real against them rather than buying them lunch.

Perhaps best for all concerned that Amin flew off to Dubai because of "long-standing commitments".



A REAL protest in Dudley in February

THE MAINSTREAM media got very worked up about some bones being moved last week. The remains of Richard III were transported from a Leicester car park to Leicester cathedral.

Want to remember this exciting occasion? Why not snap up a Richard III pillowcase for £18.50 or a charm necklace for £15? For those with more taste a tea towel (pictured) at £15.50.

Ha ha ha ha



Stinking, filthy rich

TORY chairman Grant Shapps promised clients they could get "stinking, filthy rich".

He did so in the second job he "over-firmly" denied having. The Tory election chief boasted of his lavish lifestyle as he tried to persuade punters to hand over cash for his secret to huge wealth.

Posing as internet guru "Michael Green", Shapps posted pictures of himself and his son (above) as "hard-core" evidence of his wealth-creating powers.

His car is "complete with in-car DVD, SatNav and just about every other refinement you could imagine in a vehicle. Why it even has a fridge!"

IN SHOCKING news Oxbridge has been denounced as "accentuating elitism". Professor of education at Cambridge university Diane Reay made the revelations in a new report.

She also branded Oxbridge as "institutionally racist". Cambridge and Oxford universities denied the claims.

City Link's Christmas sackings broke law

AN MPS' report has found that courier firm City Link broke the law when it went bankrupt over Christmas.

Some 2,586 workers lost their jobs as a result.

If a firm intends to make more than 100 workers redundant, there is a statutory consultation period of 45 days.

But there was no consultation period in this case.

There is a fine of £5,000 on firms breaking the law.

MPs on the Commons'

Scottish Affairs and Business, Innovation and Skills Committee found that workers weren't told the truth about the state of the firm.

They said this deceit was "for the financial benefit" of City Link's private equity owner Better Capital.

This contradicts Better Capital boss Jon Moulton, who claimed it wasn't definite that

City Link would go bust until Christmas day.

And the fine? It will be paid by us.

Jon Moulton

Rich hedging on election

THE MAIN parties are raking it in thanks to generous hedge fund bosses. Boss Martin Taylor is the latest revealed to have donated cash to Labour.

Taylor's private health firm is bidding for £1.2 billion worth of work from the NHS.

Over at the Lib Dems, party leader Nick Clegg told one potential donor that his donation could be split over two years to ensure anonymity.

The donor in question is former hedge fund manager Paul Wilmott, who gave £10,000 to the party.



FAT CAT OF THE WEEK

No 47532

Baron Wolfson of Aspley Guise

Next boss

• Tory peer boss of fashion giant Next claims its £6.70-an-hour pay was "enough to live on".

• He is "worth" an estimated £112 million and earns a basic salary of £350 an hour.

• Next announced £782 million of profits.

• Wolfson's pay and perks package for 2013/14 was £4.6 million

Police got your number?

PEOPLE ARE having their telephone numbers collected and stored by Police Scotland after being frisked under controversial stop and search powers, the Sunday Herald newspaper has revealed.

A secret memo last year authorised the single force to record telephone numbers in their national search database.

• THE FORMER Scottish Health Secretary Alex Neil appointed an official from his local SNP branch to a £12,000-a-year NHS post.

The former Health Secretary promoted ScotRail manager Phil Campbell as vice chair of NHS Lanarkshire last November.

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'Academies suck'—now let's escalate the action

by ANDREW SMITH and SHEILA AMROUCHE

WORKERS IN the NUT, NASUWT and GMB unions at three south east London schools began a two-day strike on Tuesday of this week.

The workers in the Prendergast Federation schools in Lewisham are fighting a plan to turn them into academies.

The schools—Prendergast (formerly Prendergast Hilly Fields), Prendergast Ladywell and Prendergast Vale—are run by the Leathersellers firm.

The strike was well supported at all three schools. Nearly 60 staff, parents and students picketed at the Prendergast site.

One teacher explained to Socialist Worker, "Staff don't trust the governors and the executive head, David Sheppard.

"Many staff have worked at the school for over 15 years and we have devoted our lives to it.

"We care about the students' education—why damage it?"

March

A GMB member said, "We need to escalate the public action, such as last Saturday's march through Lewisham."

Up to 200 students, parents, teachers and supporters of the Stop Academies in Lewisham (Sail) campaign joined that march against the academy plan.

Students shouted, "Academy status sucks" and called on the Leathersellers to be "goodfellas" by giving into public opinion.

There was a colourful display of banners from Sail, Lewisham and Southwark College unions, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Greenwich NUT, the GMB and People Before Profit.

Grace, a local sixth form student,



PART OF the protest last Saturday in Lewisham

PICTURE: ANDREW SMITH

was worried that her school would become an academy if the Prendergast schools did.

"Why fix something if it isn't broken?" she asked. "I just want a world that's fair."

NUT member Benine said, "I want

a parental vote. It's wrong not to give us a voice."

Another teacher said staff are "worried about jobs and worried about restructuring" if the academy plan goes through.

Students from Prendergast had

organised their own ballot the day before the protest, when 294 voted against academy status and only eight for.

They called on the governors to hold a binding ballot of parents.

Students said they had been threatened with removal by school security and with up to five days exclusion for staging sit-downs in the past. They are prepared to continue.

Local NUT branch secretary Martin-Powell Davies said unions had offered to call off this week's strike if governors postponed the consultation and conducted a parental ballot.

Elected mayor Sir Steve Bullock and Frankie Sulke, council executive director for children and young people, offered talks on Thursday.

But this was too little too late—and the strike went ahead.

Decision

Governors have set a consultation period from Monday of this week through Easter until 18 May before a final decision is taken.

However the education secretary has already issued an order for conversion.

And so far the consultation appears to be no more than a paper exercise. It meets none of the demands of the campaign.

Now is the time to escalate the action and force Leathersellers to back down.

Visit **Stop Academies in Lewisham** on Facebook or email

stopacademiesinlewisham@gmail.com for more information.

Send messages of support for strikers to gmb.lewisham@tiscali.co.uk,

nut@lewisham.gov.uk and kathy.duggan@exec.nasuwt.org.uk

GMB members are not receiving strike pay and urgently need donations—send to GMB Lewisham, Room 206, Lewisham Town Hall, Rushey Green, Catford, London, SE6 4RU

IN BRIEF

Benefit cuts kill, warn MPs

MPs HAVE called for an independent review into benefit sanctions, which they say are "causing severe financial hardship".

The cross-party select committee noted that the government has had to investigate 40 people who took their own lives after having their benefits cut off or changed.

First seals new Tory rail deal

THE TORIES extended the Great Western rail franchise to FirstGroup to April 2016. The firm is to pay £68 million to the government.

But this doesn't make up for the £826.6 million FirstGroup withheld when the government was refusing to extend its franchise.

Tainted blood inquiry reports

A SCOTTISH public inquiry into people infected with deadly HIV or Hepatitis C from NHS blood treatments was set to publish its final report on Wednesday of this week.

The Penrose inquiry began in 2008.

IPCC reports on Mark Duggan

THE INDEPENDENT Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) was set to publish its report into the shooting of Mark Duggan this week.

It has already upheld the Duggan family's complaint that cops failed to inform them of his death in 2011.

ON THE WEB

Top five hits this week on www.socialistworker.co.uk

- 1 Thousands march in London against racism
- 2 Detained migrants speak out—'this is the same as a prison'
- 3 Hillsborough police chief gives final evidence to inquest
- 4 The drugs don't work—behind our rulers' Afghanistan lies
- 5 Blacklisted—How workers are taking on the building firms

Socialist Worker

MAY DAY GREETINGS



To celebrate May Day, Socialist Worker prints solidarity messages from readers, trade union branches, SWSS groups and campaigns. The deadline to get your message into Socialist Worker is **Wednesday 15 April**

mayday@socialistworker.co.uk

Over 500 black deaths in custody since 1991

by ANNETTE MACKIN

MORE THAN 500 black and ethnic minority people died at the hands of the state over the last 24 years. And no one has been successfully prosecuted for their deaths.

A report into institutional racism published by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) revealed the figures this week—and it says the situation is getting worse.

The Dying for Justice report examined deaths in police custody, prison and immigration detention since 1991.

It found that although narrative verdicts at inquests have often returned criticisms of procedures,

FIGURE IT OUT

509
black and ethnic minority people have died in state custody between 1991 and 2014

348
deaths were in prisons

0
people have been successfully prosecuted for their deaths

lessons are not being learned. Instead, issues such as privatisation of services have made it even harder to hold the system to account.

The report also exposes the gauntlet bereaved families are made to run after a loved one has died in state custody.

Chair of IRR Colin Prescod writes about the families' experience, "First you are wronged, then you are wrong footed."

"The processes for getting justice are all smoke and mirrors."

"But the wronged will not rest. The families' movement, in particular, will not go away."

Read more about the findings of the Dying for Justice report online at irr.org.uk/news/dying-for-justice



Thousands join protest and stand up to racism

A loud, angry and young march through London showed the mood to take on racism, says Ken Olende

MORE THAN 10,000 people marched through central London against racism last Saturday while 2,500 marched in Glasgow (see below, right) and 150 in Cardiff.

The protests were part of an international day of action that saw anti-racists take to the streets across the world (see right).

Nasir from Wolverhampton said, “All these people from different backgrounds show those who are trying to divide us that they’re not going to win.”

Many people on the London protest marched in blocs. Two of the liveliest were made up of students and anti-deportation campaigners.

Nathan, a student in Leeds, was marching “because I hate the way Muslims are being used as scapegoats”.

The defiant atmosphere on the protest was summed up by a home-made placard carried by one young woman in a hijab.

Donkey

It read, “Farage you donkey, I’ll speak Somali on the train if I want to”.

School students at Stoke Newington School in north London had made a banner saying “Stoke School—rage against racism”. Teachers and students marched

BACK STORY

Anti-racist protests took place across the world last Saturday

- Anti-fascists in Greece originally called the day of action
- They called for solidarity in the fight against Nazi Golden Dawn
- Over 10,000 people marched in central London—more than last year
- Marchers were angry at mainstream parties’ Islamophobia
- They also opposed Ukip and the detention of migrants

together behind it.

Abi came on one of several coaches from Sheffield. She told Socialist Worker, “More Muslims are being harassed.

“It’s getting so some people are afraid to leave home. I came to stand up against that.”

Support from major trade unions was vital in building the event, which was called by Stand Up To Racism.

Trade union banners were held high throughout the demo.

A group of young Muslims from You Elect were trying to encourage Muslims to vote and to make sure



PART OF the anti-racist march in London last Saturday

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

no politician takes them for granted. They clustered around their mascot dressed in a bear costume.

The Stand Up To Racism demonstration was first called last year in response to a call from anti-fascists in Greece.

The London march was bigger than last year’s—and was young and militant.

Staff at one cafe brought out trays of free drinks for protesters waiting in the cold as coaches arrived from across England. Passersby applauded as the march surged down Regent Street.

Marchers opposed deportations,

Ukip and discrimination against Roma people.

“There are many, many more of us than you,” chanted anti-racists as they streamed past a dozen or so racists holding a “counter-demo” at Piccadilly Circus.

A rally in Trafalgar Square opened with hard-hitting speeches from people fighting for justice after a relative died at the hands of the authorities.

Other speakers included union leaders, politicians and activists.

Among them were Diane Abbott MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, George Galloway MP, Green Party leader

Natalie Bennett and Jo Cardwell of Stand Up to Ukip.

Weyman Bennett is joint secretary of Unite Against Fascism and one of the organisers of the demo.

He told the rally, “We’re standing together against those people that want to divide us.

“You saw the front of the demo with doctors and nurses. The NHS was built by migrants and migrants should be welcomed here.”

More online

For a longer report and more pictures go to bit.ly/IHSmcdl

GET INVOLVED

As politicians continue to scapegoat migrants and whip up Islamophobia, anti-racists will be organising in the run-up to the general election.

● For details of anti-fascist activities go to uaf.org.uk and follow @uaf on Twitter

● Go to standuptoukip.org for details of activities against Ukip and follow @standuptoukip on Twitter

Noisy march hits Glasgow

AROUND 2,500 people joined a noisy and diverse march in Glasgow from as far afield as Aberdeen and Newcastle.

The Scottish TUC mobilised people in force. Teachers, local government workers and transport workers marched, waving flags and banners.

They protested alongside contingents of students from



A marcher in Glasgow

Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Ongoing protests

against the detention of immigrants made Close Dungavel placards popular.

Groups of protesters travelled on to Edinburgh after the demo to oppose the racist Pegida group, which had planned a protest there. While 200 anti-racists gathered outside the parliament, only four Pegida supporters showed up.

Migrants join mass demo in Athens

PROTESTS TOOK place across Europe and beyond last Saturday. Anti-fascists in Greece called the day of action to seek solidarity against the Nazi Golden Dawn.

Protesters took to the streets in Germany, Ireland, France and Ferguson in the US, among other places.

Tens of thousands marched in Greece’s capital Athens.

They included large numbers of immigrants from Africa, South Asia and the Middle East.

They marched from Omonoia Square, near where many immigrants live, to Syntagma Square outside parliament.

Students and youth blocs added a sense of dynamism to the march.

Trade unions, councils, immigrant organisations and left wing parties all spoke.

The march ended with a concert featuring friends of Pavlos Fyssas, an anti-racist musician murdered by Golden Dawn members in 2013.

Pavlos’ death triggered strikes that forced the government to jail Golden Dawn’s leaders.

Their trial for conspiracy is finally set to take place next month.

Anti-fascists also marched in Thessalonica where Nazi occupiers deported and killed thousands of Jews.

There were also marches in Patras, where migrant farm workers protested after being shot at by their bosses, and Chania.

Dave Sewell

Farage forced to flee pub by ‘Cabaret of Diversity’

by ZAK COCHRANE

AROUND 100 anti-Ukip activists staged a protest last Sunday at a pub in Downe, Kent, that Nigel Farage regularly frequents.

The “Beyond Ukip Cabaret of Diversity” included breastfeeding mums, migrants, disabled and LGBT rights groups, HIV activists and a Holocaust survivor.

Highlights included Palestinian Dabke dancers, a parody performance of ‘Ukippers’ and gay men dancing to the song It’s Raining Men while beating a bigotry piñata. We wanted to expose Ukip’s scapegoating of marginalised groups.

Protest organiser and HIV activist Dan Glass said, “Ukip is a con. It pretends to be anti-establishment but this couldn’t be further from the truth.

“By wrongfully shifting the blame for the economic crisis onto immigrants they have let the bankers off the hook.”

Activists learned that Farage was in a pub nearby so we made a conga-line to the pub. One



Farage makes a run for it

protester said Farage “charged like a bull” as he pushed through the group to get to his car.

The Ukip leader suggested that his children had gone missing during the protest.

A photographer present refuted this after seeing a “woman leaving with two children” before Farage left.

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WHAT WE THINK

ELECTION FROTH CAN’T HIDE CRISIS IN POLITICS

THE GENERAL election campaign has officially begun—though in reality it has already been going for more than a year.

Election froth and trivia dominate the media. Politicians get grilled in television studios or have cosy chats in their kitchens. The election is treated like a game.

Yet there is a deep crisis in official politics that the mainstream press barely understands.

We are going into a general election and, for the second time, it’s not clear if any party will get a majority.

The Tories should be on the ropes after five years of austerity. Yet Labour has failed to beat them in some opinion polls.

The problem is that there’s a stifling consensus on the two biggest issues in the election—

austerity and racism. The Tories have no shame about their enthusiasm for attacking working class living standards. They revel in having an excuse to wield the knife on the public services they resent having to provide.

They also use every opportunity to whip up racism against migrants and Muslims. The Tories hope to

distract workers from blaming them for low pay, poverty and lack of affordable homes.

Meanwhile, Ed Miliband and the Labour leadership don’t challenge the Tories’ logic. They offer a diluted version of Tory austerity. And instead of challenging the right’s racist agenda they continually pander to it.

This fertile ground has allowed the racists of Ukip to grow.

In Scotland the independence referendum caused a political earthquake—and the aftershocks are still being felt. The latest polls show Labour risks a virtual wipeout, potentially losing at least 29 out of its 41 MPs in Scotland.

The Scottish National Party

“**For the second time it’s not clear if any party will get a majority in the election**

LIFT THE LID ON ABUSE

COPS WHO had evidence implicating MPs and others in child sex abuse were threatened with the Official Secrets Act if they did not drop the cases.

A scandal was covered up with the connivance of the police, the intelligence services and senior politicians. But that facade is starting to crack.

Tory home secretary Theresa May repeated in parliament assurances that the act should not stop anyone from giving

evidence to the inquiry into child sex abuse.

David Cameron repeated the reassurances. It was guff.

An amendment to a crime bill would have given immunity from prosecution only in relation to historical incidences of child abuse.

But May and most of her coalition colleagues blocked it.

The threat of using the Official Secrets Act to prosecute people who give evidence to any inquiry should of course be lifted.

But Socialist Worker goes

further. The Official Secrets Act should be abolished.

Its only purpose is to protect those at the top from having to reveal what they are up to.

The security services should release all their files on politicians living and dead. Political parties’ whips should do the same.

The full truth of the child abuse committed and covered up by the establishment may not come out.

But we should have no truck with attempts to keep that truth hidden.

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Protesters in London reject Ukip’s lies

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

ANALYSIS

DENIS GODARD



Le Pen uses votes to strengthen fascism

COULD MARINE Le Pen's fascist Front National (FN) win the next French presidential election in 2017? The dominant trend on the French left is to see the FN's gains only through this prism.

Seen this way, the FN had a setback in last weekend's elections because it didn't arrive in first place nationally—and therefore wouldn't win the presidentials.

But such an analysis only paralyses us.

These elections represent a step forward for the FN both ideologically and geographically.

Through local campaigns and with the help of its elected representatives, the FN is putting down roots. It's building an activist machine, developing its positions in the apparatus of the state and increasing its legitimacy.

It has once again won more than 5 million votes, this time in the elections that are supposedly the most difficult for outsider parties. They concern more than 2,000 very localised areas—and until now, the FN had a representative in just one of them.

This time it won four in the first round, and will contest the second round in 1,100 more. It took first place in 43 of the 98 "departments" these localities are grouped in.

When the FN won control of 14 towns in last year's municipal elections, some hid behind the hope that its representatives would discredit themselves once in office.

But where it won positions last year it has gone further this year, such as in Beziers in the south of France.

Beziers also illustrates how the FN is training its members and its voters into taking harder positions.

A week before the elections, the mayor organised a gathering of those nostalgic for French rule in Algeria. They took a road named to celebrate the end of the French-Algerian war, and renamed it after a general who backed a coup attempt to stop Algerian independence.

The FN stood nearly 4,000 candidates in 93 percent of localities. Never before were so many racist "slip-ups" heard from FN candidates. This didn't stop their vote increasing.

Militias

Worse, a few weeks before the elections, FN members helped farmers in the Tarn "department" organise armed militias to violently blockade an environmental protest camp opposing the construction of a dam. A few days later dockers in the CGT union joined FN members in attacking environmentalists.

The FN has advanced so much in Tarn that it will contest the second round in 18 out of its 23 localities.

The main parties have responded to this in the worst possible way. On the evening of the first round of the elections, centre left prime minister Manuel Valls denounced the FN. But at the same time he said he wanted to listen to its aspirations and its voters—then went on about law and order and "secularism", which means attacking Muslims.

The campaign had been dominated by debates about banning headscarves in universities, scrapping pork-free school meals for Muslim and Jewish children, and reinforcing the government's anti-terrorist arsenal. This came just as the government was passing new measures against workers.

Fascism begins to triumph when it takes hold of society. Elections are just one of the tools it uses to do that. So let us be clear. The result of these elections is another step forward for fascism in France.

The day before the elections was the international day of anti-racism on 21 March. More than 10,000 demonstrators in 20 towns and cities around France marched "together against fascism and all forms of racism" demanding "equality or nothing".

It brought together a wide range of 130 organisations. And this diversity was reflected in the march in Paris. It was noisy, working class and with many people from ethnic minorities.

And while some left parties boycotted it, a high level of participation from others showed that part of the left is beginning to grasp the danger.

That this was the strongest mobilisation against racism in France for years certainly gives an idea of how much ground we have lost. But it's by building on this base—combined with a return of struggles against attacks on workers—that the present dynamic can be reversed.

There is no more time to waste.

Denis Godard is a member of the New Anticapitalist Party in France's anti-racism commission, and anti-fascist coalition Conex

Hillsborough police failings 'direct cause of fans' deaths'

An expert's testimony at the Hillsborough inquests follows the admission by police commander, reports **Sadie Robinson**

POLICE FAILED to stop a dangerous buildup of fans in the run-up to the Hillsborough football disaster, inquests have heard.

Some 96 Liverpool football fans died after a crush at the Sheffield stadium in April 1989. Policing expert Douglas Hopkins gave evidence to fresh inquests into their deaths last week.

Hopkins said South Yorkshire Police focused on the threat of public disorder at matches, not safety.

He said he would have positioned officers to form fans into a queue outside the Leppings Lane turnstiles and said a filtering system was "essential".

Hopkins also said he would have considered delaying kick off and calling for more officers at 2.33pm.

He said it should have been "very obvious" to a competent match commander at 2.40pm that kick off should have been delayed.

Disaster

Hopkins was asked about the chief superintendent in charge on the day of the disaster, David Duckenfield. He said being match commander at Hillsborough was "a step too far" for Duckenfield.

He agreed that Duckenfield had "considerable experience of different operational situations" and was "capable of taking difficult decisions quickly". He also agreed

that Duckenfield had "intimate experience of football crowds" before the disaster.

Duckenfield finished giving evidence to the inquests on Wednesday of last week. He agreed that his failings were "the direct cause of the deaths of 96 persons in the Hillsborough tragedy".

Duckenfield ordered a gate open to relieve a crush outside the Leppings Lane

TOP COP David Duckenfield leaving the inquests (above), tribute to those killed in the disaster (left)

turnstiles. He agreed that had fans not been allowed to flow into pens 3 and 4 the crush would not have occurred.

Crush

Duckenfield agreed that fans arriving at 2.20pm were "simply joining the back of a huge mass of people".

The final entry in a police log from the day was timed at 2.21pm. Duckenfield said that the log "had to go by the board due to the crisis".

Pete Weatherby QC said this showed the crisis was "becoming apparent at very shortly after 20 past 2".

Duckenfield said he "couldn't dispute" that. He eventually agreed he "froze".

Duckenfield confirmed he was suspended from duty on

4 August 1989. He retired on 10 November 1991 after a doctor declared him "unfit to undertake the duties of a police constable".

Former chief superintendents Terry Wain and Donald Denton were set to give evidence to the inquests this week. They were responsible for gathering evidence from officers after the disaster.

Former officer Clive Davis told the inquests earlier this month that Wain told a meeting, "We are going to put the blame for this disaster where it belongs—on the drunken, ticketless Liverpool fans."

More online...

More reports from the inquests at socialistworker.co.uk/art/40159/1

'Muslim plot' school probe slammed

A parliamentary report has criticised recent investigations into Birmingham schools.

Schools inspectorate Ofsted inspected 21 schools last year after a hoax letter claimed there was a "Muslim plot", known as Trojan Horse, to take them over.

The report by the education committee found the investigations "raised questions about the reliability of Ofsted inspections".

Ofsted placed in special measures several schools it previously rated as

outstanding. The report said inspectors may have "lost objectivity". It noted that one assistant principal complained that Ofsted was "not impartial".

There were also several inquiries. The report said this was "far from helpful".

Their recommendations "went far beyond the situation in the particular schools". Yet it noted, "No evidence of extremism or radicalisation, apart from a single isolated incident, was found by any of the inquiries and there was no evidence of a sustained plot".

Staff and parents protesting at Al-Hijrah school, Birmingham

FIGURE IT OUT

21 schools were inspected by Ofsted after a hoax letter alleging a "Muslim plot" to take them over

5 official inquiries were carried out into the claims in Birmingham

1 "single isolated incident" of "extremism or radicalisation" was found—and there was "no evidence of a sustained plot"

There's nothing to feel good about in Tory Osborne's budget

The Tories gloated when the final budget before the election was announced. But they have failed even by their own standards—and the only winners are the rich, says **Dave Sewell**

TORY CHANCELLOR George Osborne last week unveiled what the right wing press called his pre-election “feel good budget”—but with little to feel good about.

Osborne had already pledged to keep slashing public spending if the Tories are elected in May.

That means £12 billion of cuts from benefits and £13 billion from government departments.

Increasing the tax free income allowance lifts 200,000 people out of income tax, though not social security. But up to five million workers are too poor to benefit.

And getting the first £1,000 of interest tax free on savings will make little difference to most basic rate taxpayers.

Far from saving tens of thousands, the average household will have debts worth almost £10,000 by the end of next year, according to accountants PriceWaterhouseCooper.

The real winner on taxation is big business. Their corporation tax has been reduced to a new low of 20 percent.

Osborne threw more cash at pushing up house prices through his Help To Buy scheme—a subsidy that helps rich developers more than first-time buyers.

Military

Then there's a series of military re-enactments and celebrations. Osborne mentioned the 1415 Battle of Agincourt in his speech more times than the NHS.

Another round of “buy 350 pints get one free” cuts on alcohol duty won't help drown the sorrows previous budgets have caused.

But the closest thing to good news was a U-turn on excluding brass bands and Scottish pipers from a tax cut for orchestras.

Osborne did say things would improve in five years. But similarly sunny “projections” he made five years ago now lie in tatters.

The weak economic recovery has been the slowest in three centuries. The economy is 5 percent smaller than Osborne said it would be.

Wages are still much lower than they were before the economic crisis. And they're growing at 1.6 percent a year, rather than the 5.4 percent Osborne projected.

It's true unemployment is going down. But these new jobs are so low paid that they make no difference either to workers' living standards or the government's tax returns.

So Osborne has had to keep moving the goalposts on his task of reducing the deficit run up by the bankers' crisis.



OSBORNE SMIRKS as he prepares to deliver his final budget last week

The extra five years of misery he is promising now are precisely what the last five years of misery were meant to avoid.

Labour pointed to Osborne's failure. But it only offered variations within the same spending limits.

Gloated

As Tory columnist Matthew d'Ancona gloated in London's Evening Standard, this “convergence” between the two parties is Osborne's real success.

Beyond fantasy figures and made up graphs, the budget only confirmed that the Tories will keep attacking us for as long as they can get away with it.

Stopping the assault will take a bigger fightback than we have seen so far.

BENEFIT SANCTIONS

Protests target Tories and Labour

PROTESTERS GATHERED outside job centres across Britain on Thursday of last week to speak out against benefit sanctions.

In Barnsley, South Yorkshire, Chris told Socialist Worker his benefits were cut off for a month after he went to hospital for an emergency operation.

He said, “We have been to the food bank this morning because we have no other way of feeding ourselves. We can't afford the bus fares home so we have a three mile walk to face.”

Many protesters were furious with Labour's shadow work and pensions secretary Rachel Reeves.

She said days earlier that, “We are not the party of people on benefits. We don't want to be seen, and we're not, the party to represent those who are out of work.”

Irresponsible

Outside the Department for Work and Pensions in London, protester Geraldine said that Reeves' comments were “irresponsible” and that “people on benefits are part of the working class”.

She lost nearly a stone in weight and has been on the verge of kidney failure when she was sanctioned for three months. “I don't think the poor are able to live very well and I think more are going to die,” she told Socialist Worker.

In Barnsley, Martin has been sent on a “workfare” placement after struggling to find work since having a heart attack at 56.

He said, “They treat me as if I am workshy. And now Rachel Reeves tells me that Labour doesn't represent people like me.

“She is right in a way—Labour doesn't represent the interests of any working class person.”

Dave Gibson, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for Barnsley Central, told the crowd, “As we've marched through town we've chanted ‘Tax the rich—not punish the poor.’ That sums up what's wrong with Tory Britain. They are stealing from the poor to make the rich even richer.

“And when Rachel Reeves said this week that Labour are not the party of people on benefits she too is siding with the rich against the poor. That is why we need a socialist alternative.”

Councils fail homeless kids

A NEW report has exposed the lack of care given to homeless teenagers.

The Children's Society found that some 12,000 homeless 16 and 17 year olds ask their local council for help each year.

It said that just one in 12 are treated properly in line with government guidance. The vast majority are failed.

And more than four in five homeless teenagers do not receive accommodation.

The report also found that half are never

properly assessed.

The Children's Society noted that councils are breaking the law when failing to assess them properly.

More than 8,000 homeless teenagers are sent home to their parents without any support to prevent abuse or neglect.

And of the small number who receive accommodation, most are not given the financial and personal support that they are legally entitled to.
Sadie Robinson



IN BRIEF

Water charges demo in Dublin

SOME 80,000 protesters brought Dublin to a standstill last Saturday, as they marched against the Irish government's introduction of water charges.

People Before Profit MP Richard Boyd Barrett told the crowd that the ruling coalition cannot continue to ignore the masses on the streets.

And he revealed there will be a number of national and regional protests before the next general election.

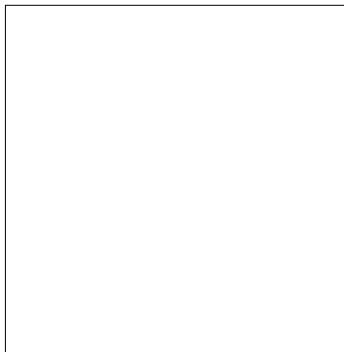
The rally was the fourth national protest against the charges.

Breakthrough for Spanish left

THE LEFT wing Podemos party had a breakthrough in an election in Andalucia, the largest region of the Spanish state.

Podemos came third and now has 15 regional MPs in Andalucia.

The Tory People's Party lost a third of its seats to Podemos



Podemos activists in Andalucia

and the new liberal party Ciudadanos.

Podemos's gains weren't as large as some activists hoped.

But it points to a collapse of the present two-party system ahead of December's general election.

Tens of thousands of people marched against austerity in the Spanish capital Madrid last Saturday in the third March For Dignity.

US oil workers return to work

OIL REFINERY workers in Louisiana were set to return to work next week after voting to accept a four-year deal with bosses.

The 800 workers were part of a walkout of 5,500 refinery staff who have been on strike since the end of January.

They are also expected to accept the deal which calls for a pay rise, maintaining health care benefit, and an immediate review of staff and workload at plants.

Protests in Germany as rulers try to beat Greece

by DAVE SEWELL

THE LATEST standoff between Europe's rulers and the Greek government began this week. Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras and German chancellor Angela Merkel held crunch talks in Berlin.

Last month's deal granted Greece a four-month bailout extension. Yet both its debt crisis and blackmail from its creditors continues.

More than £1 billion was pulled out of Greek banks last week.

The Greek government is struggling to pay £1.1 billion in pensions and salaries this month. It also has £4.3 billion in loan repayments due over two weeks.

But European institutions refused to release the bailout money they agreed.

They accused the Greek government of not imposing free market "reforms" quickly enough.

Tsipras' radical left Syriza party, elected in January, still pushed ahead last week with a "humanitarian crisis bill" and a debt relief bill to aid the poorest.

Tsipras wrote to Merkel. He urged her "not to allow a small cash flow issue" to "turn into a large problem for Greece and for Europe."

Austerity

But his pleas fell on deaf ears—whether they were addressed to Merkel or the European Central Bank (ECB) and France and Italy's leaders who he hopes to split from her austerity project.

Europe's rulers are determined to entrench austerity and attack workers' rights.

They're hoping this will restore their profits and get them out of the crisis. Pushing Greece into bankruptcy is a small price for them to pay.

But there is opposition within the European Union (EU) from its periphery to its core.

Thousands of protesters spoiled the fanfare at the opening of the ECB's new offices in Frankfurt on Thursday of last week.

More than 5,000 people blocked roads during the day. And up to 30,000 people joined a march and rally in the evening called by the Blockupy coalition.

Much of the media coverage focused on protesters' "violence"—as if setting a few cars on fire compares to the lives wrecked by austerity in Greece and elsewhere.

Delegations of trade unionists from all over Europe joined the march, as did workers from across Germany.

Germany's bosses have benefitted

from being the EU's high export economic powerhouse.

But its workers haven't. The same politicians who are out to humiliate Greece have pushed their wages down and rolled back their workplace rights.

Students from ten student unions marched on the Greek ministry of education on Thursday of last week.

Cancel

They chanted "Cancel the debt" and "Money for health and education, not banks".

They brought the student movement's demands to the new minister Aristides Baltas.

He said their demands were just, but couldn't be met because of Greece's debt commitments.

To beat austerity, it will mean taking the movements and their demands forward.

It also means reaching out to angry German workers—not telling protesters to wait for the mercy of the German ruling class.



On other pages...

What does the Israeli election mean for Palestinians? >>> Page 15

PROTESTERS CLASH with cops outside the European Central Bank in Frankfurt

Tunisian government plans mass crackdown

A TERROR attack killed 23 people and injured tens more in the Bardo National Museum in Tunis, Tunisia, on Wednesday of last week.

Hundreds took to the streets that night to condemn the killing. Thousands marched on Friday 20 March—Tunisian independence day—to say that they will remain united.

The Tunisian government called for "national unity" to fight terrorism.

Many officials are arguing that a "social truce" between workers and bosses is required to fight terrorism.

The ruling class wants to fund its repressive campaign by squeezing the working class.

This is not the first time it's used the "war on terror" to halt the struggle for social justice.

The police have already launched dawn raids targeting

Police patrol after the attack

impoverished areas that triggered the revolution in 2011.

The deep state doesn't miss any opportunity to punish those who rose up against it

Working class unity is needed more than ever in Tunisia to stand against both state violence and terrorism.

Jaouhar Tounsi

Longer on socialistworker.co.uk

Facts at fingertips

I WAS really pleased to read the centre pages you had last week (Socialist Worker, 21 March) all about immigration and the lies that are told.

It is scary how much immigrants are being blamed for all the problems in Britain.

You have to have the facts. And the issues covered in your paper about migrants and housing and the health service are so useful to have at your fingertips.

I was also interested to find out about immigration controls only being quite a recent occurrence. Thanks for the useful article.

Laura
North London

No to bad science

HUGH PARSONS (Letters, 21 March) writes in favour of homeopathy, pointing to some of the disasters caused by big pharma, such as thalidomide.

But homeopathy remains bad science. It rests on beliefs once thought to be scientific—like water having memory.

Babies' lives are put at risk and sometimes lost when parents, frightened by big pharma, choose not to immunise their children against killer diseases such as measles.

Instead they choose ineffective remedies such as homeopathic vaccines.

Placebos sometimes have a place in good medicine—but it should be a very limited place.

Dr Kambiz Boomla
East London

Socialists back Polish miners in their fight

A PROTEST took place outside the Polish consulate in Edinburgh in solidarity with Polish miners in the region of Silesia earlier this month.

They are fighting mine closures, job losses, extension of the working week and attacks on the union.

Ten miners were sacked after trade union activists organised a solidarity demonstration.

The state retaliated by firing tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets

at unarmed protesters.

There is a growing and visible Polish community in Edinburgh.

They face exploitative practices by bosses and anti-immigrant racism.

Socialists and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) back the miners and stand united against racism.

An injury to one is an injury to all.

Ayesha Saleem
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) candidate for
Edinburgh East

Obama still fuels the fires that Bush's wars started

ACCORDING TO US president Barack Obama the rise of Isis is an "unintended consequence" of the invasion and occupation of Iraq that was championed by his predecessor George W Bush.

He said Isis is "a direct outgrowth of Al Qaida in Iraq".

This is hardly new information. US intelligence agencies warned Bush prior to the war that it would lead to instability.

Senator John D Rockefeller revealed that intelligence had told them that an "American invasion would bring about instability in Iraq that would be exploited by Iran and Al Qaida terrorists".

So the rise of Al Qaida and then Isis was not unexpected.

The Bush invasion strategy failed.

US-led armed forces were defeated in both Iraq and in Afghanistan.

Obama is signalling a shift in US policy.

But under Obama there has also been much continuity with the Bush regime.

Prisoners are still locked up in Guantanamo Bay despite Obama's election promise to shut it down.

And the number of deadly drone attacks in Pakistan have increased.

Last summer Obama continued to arm Israel as it waged a brutal and devastating war on Gaza.

His recent public disagreements with Israeli leader Binyamin

Netanyahu are about a refusal to continue with the illusion of "peace talks" with the Palestinians.

But talking peace while waging war is a policy developed for Israel under the Bush regime.

All of these are factors that led to the rise of Isis.

But importantly the grievances and injustices that sustain it remain in place under Obama's current policies.

To win real peace in the Middle East requires a movement that can unite all of the people of the region against their rulers.

And we need a movement that will get rid of ours.

Mark Krantz
Manchester

We shouldn't support a call to vote SNP

AFTER LAST year's referendum in Scotland many people have joined the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) looking for a progressive, left wing alternative to Labour.

The Labour-run council in Glasgow has pushed through massive cuts.

I was a community worker with the council until it cut that service.

John Brown (Letters, 21 March) asks us to vote SNP.

But the SNP is not an anti-austerity party. They share power in Edinburgh and Dundee and have

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon

made massive cuts too.

It would be to betray our principles of fighting the cuts if we were to back the SNP in the election in May.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)

is standing anti-austerity candidates.

It calls for investment in public services, jobs and opportunities for young people.

But far from being the "pariahs" John suggests, many people are happy to hear an alternative voice against cuts and the scapegoating of migrants.

I welcome friendly debates ahead of the vote. But its an opportunity to say enough of the cuts.

We can't afford to water the message down.

Clare Lyall
Glasgow

Just a thought...

Rodney Reed must be freed

THE COURT of Criminal Appeals (CCA) in the US began reviewing Rodney Reed's case this week.

Rodney is on death row in Texas for a murder he did not commit.

The CCA is set to rule by the end of April about whether he should receive DNA testing.

Let's keep the pressure on to make sure the CCA knows what is obvious to us—Rodney is innocent and should be free!

We Demand Justice—Free
Rodney Reed Campaign

Solidarity to fire strikers

SENDING solidarity wishes to the Fire and Rescue control workers in Essex striking against shift changes and a new computer system.

They work so hard under a lot of pressure. It's a disgrace that bosses blame them for the computer system's failures.

Anne Doherty
East London

Greens are not so radical

LIKE GRAHAM Manley (Letters, 21 March) many people on the left are now considering joining the Green Party.

The party's left wing rhetoric provides a welcome alternative to all the major parties. But its record in office is less impressive. The Greens have put through cuts.

Capitalism cannot be reformed—it has to be smashed. This is why it's important to be in a revolutionary party such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Bethan Turner
East London

Greek workers must organise

THE TROIKA, banks and big business want to crush Greek workers.

The crisis is reaching a decisive stage. Left party Syriza's leaders have roared like lions but have come out like lambs.

The working class need to organise.

Revolutionaries should give the lead to shift control to workers. It's the only way to defend the Greek people from the bosses' onslaught.

Ron Senchak
Manchester

ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

As protests spread inside the brutal centres where refugees are locked up, current and former detainees tell Ken Olende the hell needs to end

ANGER AND protests over the treatment of people detained in immigration detention centres are rising. Hunger strikes and protests have spread to many of the ten detention centres, including Dungavel near Glasgow.

One detainee in Dungavel told Socialist Worker, “People here are angry because they’ve been here so long. I was one of those refusing to eat.

“I’ve been up for bail eight times. The last time I went to court the judge said, ‘If I see this man again I’m just going to release him’.

“That was a year and a half ago. Before I was detained I was in prison for three years. I got asylum in 2002.

“I was living with my family, but we had problems and I ended up homeless. I started shoplifting. That was my crime. I stole £5 or £10 here and there. I didn’t kill anybody. In the end I was jailed for three years.

“I’m slowly going mad. I’m talking to myself. I’m pulling my hair out.

“I’m from Iran. The home office can’t get travel papers to deport me. My mum passed away before I was detained. If I could go to Iran don’t you think I would have gone back for her funeral?

“I feel nobody cares about me or any of us. That’s why we protest.”

Haile, who is being held in the Verne in Dorset, told Socialist Worker that protests have continued there. “The heating has been off here for the past three or four days,” he said. “It may be spring, but it’s freezing in these old stone rooms.

Punished

“We held a protest about it and they punished us by putting our privileges back to basic.”

A report by a cross-party panel of MPs published earlier this month criticised the current detention system as “expensive, ineffective and unjust”.

Detainees are rightly calling for all centres to be closed. But the report’s key recommendation is to introduce “a time limit of 28 days on the length of time anyone can be held in immigration detention”.

Currently people who cannot be deported can be held indefinitely.

Former detainee Souleymane, told the inquiry, “The difference between prison and detention—in prison, you count your days down, but in detention you count your days up.”

One detainee



Glasgow has seen long-running campaigns against detention

Picture: Duncan Brown

wrote in evidence, “Detention is a way to destroy people: they do not kill you directly, but instead you kill yourself.”

The report criticised the fast track system that often deports people before they can get legal advice. It said this is “focused on utilising detention for administrative convenience” rather than justice.

Banned

It noted that many detainees are stopped from looking freely at the internet. In some centres banned sites “include the websites of Amnesty International, the BBC, IRC visitors groups, foreign language newspapers and other NGOs”.

The inquiry’s own site was banned in some centres.

And many don’t allow social networking sites such as Facebook, which allow people to maintain contact with friends and relatives.

Witness statements quoted in the report show that people who have been trafficked are often treated as criminals rather than victims.

One witness to the inquiry, “C”, is a woman who had been trafficked from West Africa and had been in detention for three years. She was brought to Britain on a false passport, and was arrested and imprisoned for that. When her sentence finished she was detained.

Other detainees complain of offensive treatment. Alice said male guards watch women while they wash and change, “They are laughing and they are saying ‘she have big boobs’.

Cornelius Katona is the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ lead on asylum mental health. He told the inquiry, “Even people who have illnesses so serious that they need to be hospitalised very often don’t get into hospital or their hospitalisation, even though it’s recommended, is postponed for long periods.”

It is anger at such treatment that has caused the current protests.

The Report of the Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention in the United Kingdom detentioninquiry.com/report

‘DETENTION IS A WAY TO DESTROY PEOPLE’

40% of detainees in Harmondsworth don’t have a lawyer

52% don’t receive legal aid and 67 percent have never been visited by their lawyer

48% of detainees in Dungavel had been there for more than three months in January

‘We got taken in a dawn raid when we were children’

Pinar Aksu

Pinar Aksu’s family fled Turkey when she was a small child.

“We were detained twice in 2007 after we had been here six years. My sister was born here. The first time we got taken in a dawn raid. The second time we went to sign in at the court and we were all

held. I remember the day because it was my sister’s fourth birthday. I was 15 and my brother was ten.

“When we got to Yarl’s Wood there were even younger people there. It was terrible. They had just started detaining a lot of people and the family centre had just opened.

“We were

one of the first families in Yarl’s Wood. It’s a massive place, like a two-floor prison. Another family said they’d been there two months. We never believed we’d

be held that long. But the first week passes. The second week passes. After the third week we were still there. The lawyers were sorting it—our

hands were tied.”

“Sometimes people waited six or seven years. The process has changed since then. People can become destitute or be detained indefinitely. People don’t flee their countries for fun—they’re coming from war and persecution.

“They think Britain welcomes people who are suffering but it does not. They are then trapped in a place where their human rights aren’t respected. “If we hadn’t been detained I would have chosen another path in life. But because of my experience and the help I received from other people I couldn’t stay silent. I get so angry that this continues.

“The hunger strike shows how people have had enough. That is all they can do inside. The alternative is suicide.

“I hope the Home Office listens. If they don’t win guards will feed them forcibly. There could be deaths.”



Pinar Aksu (far right), who was detained in Yarl’s Wood in 2007, leading a recent protest in solidarity with hunger strikers at Dungavel

Picture: Josh Brown

MPs’ report slammed conditions in detention

CAMPSFIELD HOUSE detention centre near Oxford (left), The migrant prisons are officially called “removal centres” (above)

‘You hear them scream’

Bamidele

Bamidele was detained for ten months.

“I was held in a lot of centres. There was no difference between them.

“They moved me around to frustrate me. The purpose was to make me give up and go back to my country, Nigeria.

“They wanted to dump me on a plane but I wasn’t fit to fly. My blood pressure went up, I couldn’t eat or sleep. I started hearing voices.

“Many detainees are ill. They don’t get proper treatment. They are suffering. They have mental illness. They can be violent. They don’t sleep. You hear them screaming. They get a lot of medication just to suppress them. Their voices have been suppressed.

“The way we were treated will stay with us for the rest of our lives.

“I still feel the pressure even



three years after being released.

“When I hear about people protesting in detention today I remember that when I was held almost everyone wanted to attempt hunger strikes.

“It is the last resort to attract attention. It is the last hope.

“I came as a refugee. They said my story was fabricated, that I was lying. They don’t believe you, but they don’t look into it.

“Since I’ve been released I’ve been going around to mobilise people with Freed Voices. A lot of people in Britain don’t even know there are detention centres. You tell them and they think you are fabricating stories.

“This is supposed to be a civilised society. It’s appalling. If people know what is happening they should campaign to close these inhuman centres.

“If the authorities can’t close them all down there should be a time limit. No human being should be detained more than two or three weeks. You wouldn’t keep an animal in a cage for six months. It is horrible.”

Freed Voices can be contacted through Detention Action detentionaction.org.uk

‘A guy in solitary banged on the wall for 23 hours’

Farhad Vahidi

Farhad Vahidi’s family fled Iran. The British government spent years trying to deport them before they won refugee status.

“I was 13 when I came to Britain. I was at school then college here.

“I went to sleep one night and then woke up with the border agency in my bedroom saying I had to leave.

“They took us to the family centre at Yarl’s Wood a week after my 18th birthday. This was in 2011.

“I didn’t have my own immigration case. But when I made my own application I had to be in adult detention on my own.

“So after a month and a half in Yarl’s Wood I was taken from my family and moved to Harmondsworth.

“You’re supposed to see



immigration officials within 72 hours, but I didn’t see anyone for ten days. Straight away they said, ‘You’re going back to Yarl’s Wood’.

“I think it was a mind game to try and find our breaking point. But we had no option but to leave—my father would have been executed in Iran.

“They had been quite nice to us in Yarl’s Wood, but Harmondsworth was different. I had to share a cell, which was locked from 8pm.

“There was a toilet with no door, just a curtain. The chairs were screwed to the floor.

“People protested any way they could. My cell was next to the solitary wing.

“One day I saw a man climb up the fence and sit on top. On one side was barbed wire and on the other a three storey drop.

“Another guy banged his feet against the wall for the whole of the 23 hours he was in solitary.

“I’m not saying deportation is right or wrong, but putting people in a situation where they feel like criminals isn’t right.”

1971

The 1971 Immigration Act created the current right of detention. It put no time limit on detention

3,378

people were in detention at the end of September 2014

29,492

people had entered detention over the previous 12 months, up 10.6 percent in four years

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7819 1170 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } { BRANCH MEETINGS }

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BARNSELEY

Syriza and socialist strategy

Thu 9 Apr, 6.30pm,
YMCA, Blucher St,
S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

Socialists, TUSC and the general election

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
Priory Rooms, Quaker Meeting House,
40 Bull St, B4 6AF

BRADFORD

Why you should read the Communist Manifesto

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Equity Centre, Perkin House,
82 Grattan Rd, BD1 2LU

BRIGHTON

Socialists and the general election

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, BN1 1AF

BRISTOL: SOUTH

Marxism, feminism and the fight for liberation

Thu 1 Apr, 7pm,
YHA, Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA

CARDIFF

Islamism today

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX

CHELMSFORD

Immigration—the myths they use to divide us

Thu 16 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Rainsford Rd, CM1 2QL

CHESTERFIELD

Immigration—the myths they use to divide us

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
Market Halls,
Market Place, S40 1PB

COLCHESTER

George Lansbury and the rebel councillors of Poplar

Tue 31 Mar, 7.30pm,
The Odd One Out,
28 Mersea Rd, CO2 7ET

COVENTRY

The racist election of 1964—how different are things today?

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
West Indian Centre,
159 Spon St, CV1 3BB

DERBY

From Selma to Ferguson—the fight for Civil Rights in the US

Thu 9 Apr, 7pm,
West End Community Centre, Mackworth Rd
(next to Britannia Mill),
DE22 3BL

DONCASTER

Why we sell Socialist Worker—the role of the revolutionary party

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Women's Centre,
21 Cleveland St,
DN1 3EH

DORCHESTER

Why we need a revolutionary party

Wed 15 Apr, 7.30pm,
Goldies Bar,
36 High East St,
DT1 1HN

EDINBURGH

Isis and counter-revolution—a Marxist analysis

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria Terrace,
EH1 2JL

ESSEX

To vote or not to vote?

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Rainsford Rd,
CM1 2QL

GLASGOW: SOUTH

Syriza and socialist strategy

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
Govanhill Baths,
99 Calder St,
G42 7RA

SOCIALIST WORKER BRANCH MEETINGS



Green Party leader Natalie Bennett

How radical are the Greens?

ABERDEEN

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
The Snug, Ma Cameron's,
6-8 Little Belmont St,
AB10 1JG

DUNDEE

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Dundee Voluntary Action,
10 Constitution Rd,
DD1 1LL

LANCASTER

Thu 16 April, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House
Meeting House Lane,
LA1 1TX

HARLOW

Alienation—tell me why I don't like Mondays

Thu 9 Apr, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
1 Church Leys,
CM18 6BX

HUDDERSFIELD

What causes child abuse?

Wed 1 Mar, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House,
2 New North Parade (near train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

IPSWICH

Why we say workers have the power to change the world

Tue 7 Apr, 7pm,
Labour Club,
33-35 Silent St,
IP1 1TF

KIRKCALDY

30 years on—how the Miners' Strike could have won

Mon 6 Apr, 7.30pm,
Betty Nicol's Pub,
297 High St,
KY1 1JL

LEAMINGTON SPA

How real is the economic recovery?

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
The Fox & Vivian,
32 Clarendon Avenue,
CV32 4RZ

LEICESTER

Imperialism in the Middle East

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Leicester Adult Education College,
2 Wellington St,
LE1 6HL

LIVERPOOL

Socialists, TUSC and the general election

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
The Brink Cafe,
21 Parr St (near Concert Square),
L1 4JN

LONDON: BRENT & HARROW

Do we need system change to stop climate change?

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
The Pepperpot Centre,
1a Thorpe Close,
Ladbroke Grove, W10 5XL

LONDON: BRIXTON

Immigration—the myths used to divide us

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd, facing Windrush Square),
SW2 1EP

LONDON: EALING

Ukip and the crisis of conservatism

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
W3 Gallery,
185 High St, Acton,
W3 9DJ

LONDON: HACKNEY

Putin, Ukraine and the West—are we heading for another Cold War?

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd (corner Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

LONDON: HORNSEY AND WOOD GREEN

50 years since his assassination—the legacy of Malcolm X

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
West Indian Cultural Centre,
9 Clarendon Rd,
Haringey, N8 0DD

LONDON: KINGSTON

Why we sell Socialist Worker—the role of the revolutionary party

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Kingston Quaker Centre,
Fairfield East, KT1 2PT

LONDON: LEWISHAM

What would a socialist society look like?

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
West Greenwich Community and Arts Centre,
141 Greenwich High Rd,
SE10 8JA

LONDON: NEWHAM

The roots of terrorism

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Stratford Advice Arcade,
107-109 The Grove,
E15 1HP

LONDON: SOUTHWARK

Is Marxism relevant today?

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
Snug Room, The Grand Union,
26 Camberwell Grove (off Camberwell Church St),
SE5 8RE

LONDON: TOTTENHAM

The roots of women's oppression

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Kitabevi Cafe,
410 Tottenham High Rd,
N17 9JB

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Putin, Ukraine and the West—are we heading for another Cold War?

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Oxford House,
Derbyshire St (Opposite Bethnal Green Rd Tesco),
E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Alienation—reign of the vampires

Wed 1 Apr 7.30pm,
Quaker Meeting House,
1a Jewel Rd (off Hoe St),
E17 4QU

MANCHESTER: CHORLTON

Socialists and elections

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Proof Bar,
30 Manchester Rd,
M21 0BQ

MANCHESTER: CITY CENTRE

Why we need a revolutionary party

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St,
M2 5NS

MANCHESTER: LONGSIGHT AND LEVENSHULME

The Westminster elite—is the old party system dying?

Wed 8 Apr 7.30pm,
Food Factory,
884 Stockport Rd,
M19 3BN

MEDWAY

Immigration—the myths used to divide us

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
Conference room,
The Nucleus Arts Centre,
272 High St, Chatham,
ME4 4BP

NEWCASTLE

Class struggle in Britain today

Thu 2 Apr, 7pm,
The Labour Club,
11 Leazes Park Rd, NE1 4PF

NEWPORT

Syriza and socialist strategy

Thu 9 Apr, 7.30pm,
Emlyn Room, Newport Centre,
1 Kingsway,
NP20 1UH

NORWICH

How real is the economic recovery?

Thu 2 Apr, 7.30pm,
Vauxhall Centre,
Johnson Place,
NR2 2SA

NOTTINGHAM

Putin, Ukraine and the West—are we heading for another Cold War?

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
International Community Centre,
61b Mansfield Rd, NG1 3FN

OXFORD

The history of fighting fascism

Wed 8 Apr, 7.30pm,
Restore,
Manzil Way (off Cowley Rd),
OX4 1YH

PORTSMOUTH

How do we fight racism?

Wed 1 Mar, 7.30pm,
Somerstown Central,
Rivers St,
PO5 4EY

SWANSEA

Class struggle in Britain today

Thu 2 Apr 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

WIGAN

Why we sell Socialist Worker—the role of the revolutionary party

Wed 1 Apr, 7pm,
Sunshine House Community Centre, Bradshawgate,
Vauxhall Rd, Scholes,
WN1 3LU

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

What is the role of trade unions in the struggle for socialism?

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Grain Store,
King St,
WV1 1ST

YORK

Is Marxism still relevant today?

Wed 1 Apr, 7.30pm,
Sea Horse Hotel,
4 Fawcett St,
YO10 4AH

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

DORCHESTER

The origins of Isis

Sat 4 Apr, 1.30pm,
Colliton Club (opposite County Hall), Colliton Park,
DT1 1XJ.

Organised by Dorset Socialists

GLASGOW

Scrap Trident march and rally

Sat 4 Apr, 10.30am,
George Square
scraptrident.org

NATIONAL

Social Work Action Network Tenth Annual Conference

Fri 10-Sat 11 Apr,
University of the West of Scotland (Paisley campus)
socialworkfuture.org

Marxism 2015 festival

Thu 9—Mon 13 Jul,
Central London.
marxismfestival.org.uk

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Paintings capture a fresh and intriguing Californian light

The Royal Academy’s exhibition of Richard Diebenkorn’s art brings together abstraction and the natural world and should not be missed, writes **Nick Grant**

THIS IS a rare opportunity to see a selection of work by the US artist Richard Diebenkorn.

Art critic Robert Hughes has described Diebenkorn as “a mediator between abstraction and natural vision”.

He said Diebenkorn’s 1967-88 Ocean Park series of paintings are “abstractions which don’t reject the world but contain it in a concentrated form.”

Diebenkorn is virtually unknown in Britain. None of his work is held in collections or museums here. None has been seen here since an exhibition at London’s Whitechapel Gallery in 1991.

This new exhibition traces his post-war career up until his death in 1993 and has been greeted with critical acclaim.

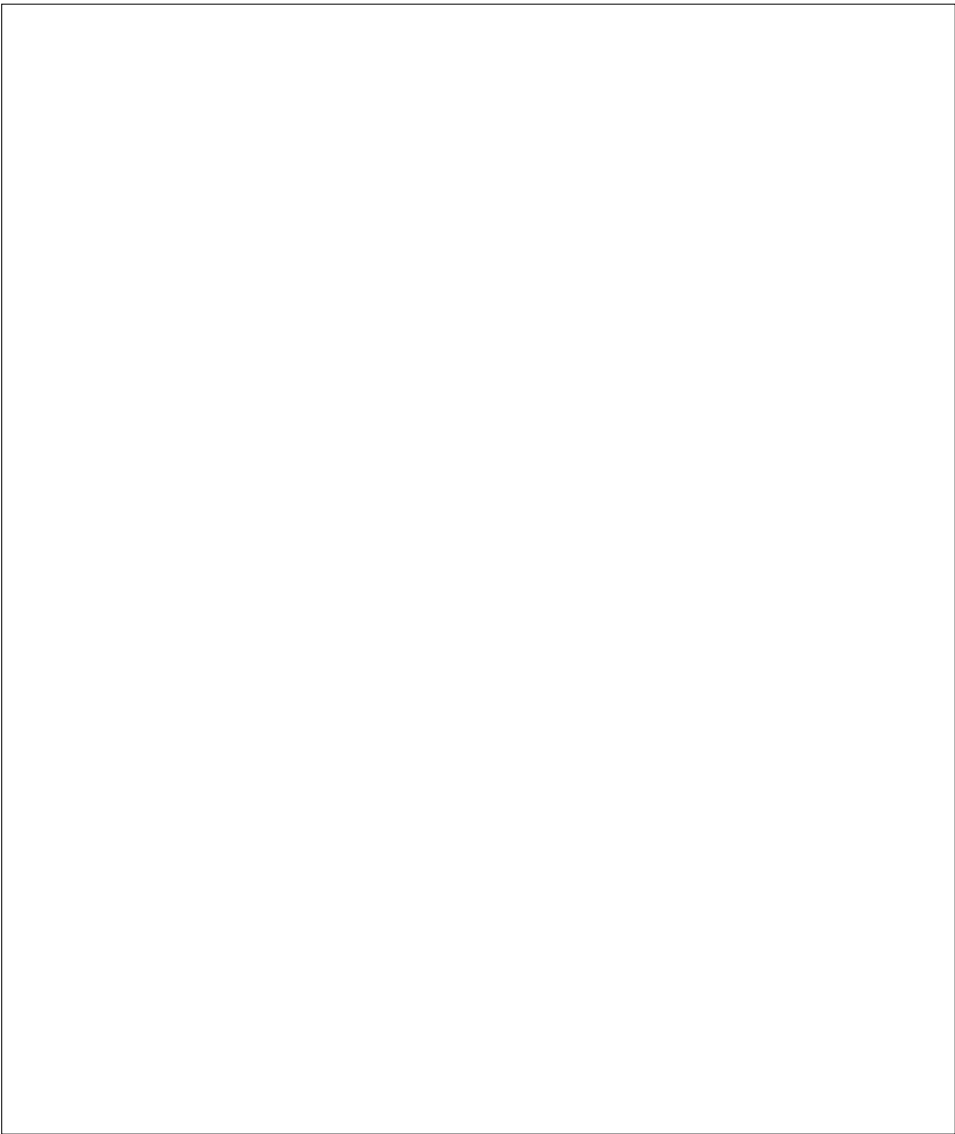
What is it that makes Diebenkorn’s work so enticing?

Obvious

When you see his work the appeal is quite simple and obvious. Three things stand out.

First, there is the way he evokes fresh Californian light through daring but always intriguing colour contrasts. He spent most of his life in the coastal district of Los Angeles that his works are named after.

Second, he foregrounds compositional beauty. In his later work, the structure is



RICHARD DIEBENKORN, Cityscape I, (Landscape No. 1), 1963, Oil on canvas

shown by charcoal-sketched grids drawn in parallel and angled lines.

Critics have suggested that the distant and elevated point of view typical of Diebenkorn’s art was inspired by his first flight in 1951. The journey from Albuquerque, in New Mexico, to San Francisco will have taken him over patchwork landscapes.

Third, there is both a mystery and hesitancy to his work, which encourages contemplation.

For example, his pictures that include people tend to avoid facial detail and are set in complex spaces.

Most of his large Ocean Park series—of which five can be seen here—have thin veils of paint over other shapes.

The edges do not show signs of masking tape. The paint on seemingly unprimed canvas is starting to fade and crack.

The catalogue includes this revealing quote from the artist, “One of the most interesting polarities in art is between representation at one end of the stick, and abstraction at the other end, and I’ve found myself all over that stick.”

This is an exhibition that is not to be missed.

Richard Diebenkorn
Royal Academy of Arts, London W1J 0BD
Until 7 June
royalacademy.org.uk

OPERA

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY OF MAHAGONNY

by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill
Royal Opera House, London WC2E 9DD
roh.org.uk

THIS OPERA was first performed in the shadow of the 1929 Wall Street Crash in Leipzig in 1930.

It was the first major collaboration between German composer Kurt Weill and Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht.

The story begins with three criminals fleeing arrest. When their lorry breaks down, they decide to stay put and set up a new city Mahagonny dedicated to making money.

They persuade some men to abandon the old cities’ drudgery and move into the new dream city.

Four friends who have made their fortunes in Alaska arrive in search of gambling,



women and cheap booze. But one of the newcomers, Jimmy, becomes dissatisfied with Mahagonny’s comforts on offer, feeling there should be more to life.

He demands that all rules be abolished, insisting that this is the road to happiness.

Jimmy is put on trial for his destructiveness—but especially for having no money.

Brecht’s play is an outspoken critique of the “roaring twenties” capitalism, and is also a powerful critique of how human relationships are commodified.

The orchestra performs Weill’s modernist music with intensity. And the production contains some fine vocal performances.

But its Las-Vegas-type setting loses the urgency and protest of the original.

There is no sense of crisis or impending doom—except at an individual level. Brecht’s political satire is soft pedalled.

Nevertheless, the production retains an element of challenge to a society in which Thatcherite values still survive. Sabby Sagall

Circa Waves—making you feel a part of the band

MUSIC

YOUNG CHASERS

Circa Waves
Transgressive, Virgin EMI
Out now
circawaves.com

GREAT SONGS aren’t perfectly polished. They depend on hooks that grab the listener from their opening chords.

And being grabbed by the songs is the real strength of Liverpool indie band Circa Waves’ debut album Young Chasers.

Its first track, Get Away,

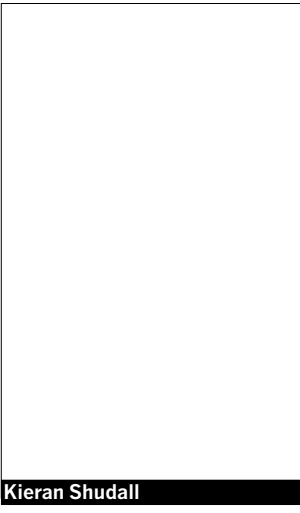
opens with a simple yet catchy guitar riff.

But it swiftly moves on. Lead guitarist and singer Kieran Shudall’s voice bursts into the song, singing, “Oh, my heart is torn up”.

His powerful and melodic voice and the four-piece band’s instruments riff off each other throughout.

It comes through in layered harmonies on the album, but loses none of this tension in concert.

The song T-Shirt Weather opens with the guitar humming along to



the melody. It builds in intensity, until the rest of the band jump in.

It fits perfectly with 80s and 90s Britpop—jangling guitars and sometimes wry lyrics which give passing commentary.

They’re about love—and when its falling apart—finding your way, but also about having fun.

While Circa Waves have only been going since 2013, they’ve built up a solid following.

The fans’ passion recalls a movement described in music journalist Michael Azerrad’s book, Our Band

Could be Your Life, which profiled 80s US “indie” bands such as Sonic Youth and Black Flag.

These bands didn’t find much mainstream success, but had long lasting following.

People could feel part of their music.

As Shudall said, “You buy into ‘that band’. You believe you’re in the gang. I want anyone who listens to our music to feel that.”

Circa Waves music is different. But if Young Chasers achieves anything, it certainly does that.

Nicola Barker

FROM THE big freeze in the US to the increasing number and ferocity of tropical storms, evidence of climate change is growing.

Yet the response of governments around the world has got weaker.

So it is no surprise that the recent Time to Act demonstration in London had a distinct anti-capitalist atmosphere to it.

Many climate activists are coming to see action against capitalism as key to saving the environment.

But the key question is, how do we end capitalism? How should we organise if we want to fight for a sustainable world? Answering this means understanding how capitalism works.

This weekend hundreds of activists will gather in central London to discuss themes raised in Naomi Klein's recent book *This Changes Everything*.

Klein places the capitalist organisation of society at the heart of the problems that are causing climate change.

She suggests that climate change "could be the best argument progressives have ever had to demand the rebuilding and reviving of local economies; to reclaim our democracies from corrosive corporate influence...to take back ownership of essential services like energy and water".

In Britain, the One Million Climate Jobs programme has argued for a similar vision. The creation of jobs in industries that can reduce emissions, and in turn have huge social benefits is a popular one among activists.

Little

But despite the logic of this, politicians have done little. David Cameron promised that his government would be the greenest ever. Yet, in practice, the Tories are offering more roads, more airports and more fracking.

Capitalism is all about creating profit. It is based on competition between different blocks of capital—businesses, companies, multinationals—which each try and outdo each other.

Under capitalism, as the revolutionary Karl Marx pointed out, production is about the accumulation of wealth for the sake of accumulation.

In doing so, capitalism shows little interest in its impact upon the wider world. Indeed, the system organises to restrict behaviour that might hit profits.

In his masterwork *Capital*, Marx argued, "All progress in capitalist agriculture is progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility."

"The more a country proceeds



ON THE people's climate march last year PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

HOW WE CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING

As activists gather for the *This Changes Everything* event in London **Martin Empson** looks at why workers are the key link in changing the world and saving the planet



Naomi Klein

from large-scale industry as the background of its development, as in the case of the United States, the more rapid is this process of destruction."

One frightening example of this is the way that in February of this year the Australian government organised a huge diplomatic campaign to prevent the United Nations listing the Great Barrier Reef as endangered.

If this happened it would stop investment in industries that might damage the reef. So



We need to challenge not just companies but the whole system

despite the threat to an important part of the world's ecology, the government acted in the interest of big business.

In order to stop climate change we need to challenge not just the behaviour of individual companies, but the whole system.

In the Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote that "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole

bourgeoisie". For capitalist governments, all the state institutions, such as the army, the police, the judiciary and so on, are not neutral, but exist to protect the status quo.

This means that any mass movement that demands action on climate change must be strong enough to force governments to act, or replace them if they don't.

Protests have put fracking companies onto the back foot and in the US have helped temporarily stop the Keystone oil pipeline.

Movement

A mass movement could force governments to invest heavily in renewable energy, or mass insulation schemes to reduce energy use.

We could win the renationalisation of the rail system and investment in public transport to reduce reliance on cars. The One Million Climate Jobs plan argues for a National Climate Service to co-ordinate climate jobs to reduce emissions on the scale needed.

But serious action on climate change directly challenges the profits of some of the largest and most powerful corporations on the planet. In the face of this, they would act to try and stop change taking place.

Klein points out how the oil and gas industry in the US spent £270,000 a day in lobbying the US Congress in 2013. They would be prepared to spend much more if their very existence was threatened.

When Klein describes the mass movements that are needed, she highlights the Civil Rights struggle, the fight for the vote and the anti-apartheid campaigns as examples of movements that have won change.

But these victories didn't fundamentally alter capitalism, though they won important reforms.

Creating a sustainable world will mean ending capitalism. This is why socialists emphasise the importance of the working class as a force that can transform society.

Some environmentalists argue that capitalists must realise the damage they are doing. Surely they won't simply sleepwalk into environmental catastrophe.

But capitalists repeatedly allow environmental disasters such as oil slicks and chemical leaks. And the experience of nuclear weapons shows they cannot be trusted.

World leaders led us close to nuclear destruction on more than one occasion. Their logic would have destroyed the world before backing down.

And since the recession began governments have backed away from the limited environmental reforms they

had promised. They say their economies can't afford them.

Marx and Engels identified the working class as capitalism's gravedigger. Without workers, capitalism couldn't function.

Workers drive buses, mine coal, erect wind turbines, run call centres, teach children and care for the sick. When they withdraw their labour they threaten the profits of the bosses.

Whenever workers fight back they begin to create their own organisations.

An example from the 1980s shows how workers have slowed capitalism's destruction of the environment.

The revolutionary socialist, trade unionist and environmentalist Chico Mendes brought together workers who tapped rubber in the Amazon and defended the forest and their livelihood.

Workers organised mass pickets to save the forest from ranchers' chainsaws and bulldozers.

Their success led a rancher to murder Mendes in December 1988.

At its height, this movement created a Forest Peoples' Alliance. It united the rubber-tappers and their traditional rivals and enemies, the Union of Indian Nations, which took over a rubber estate.

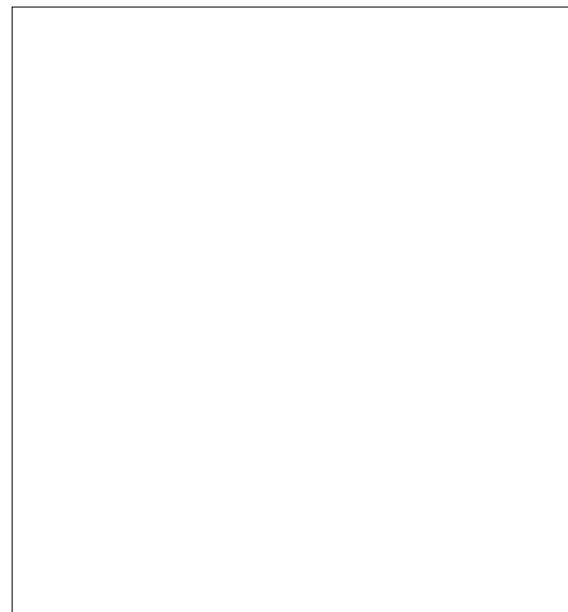
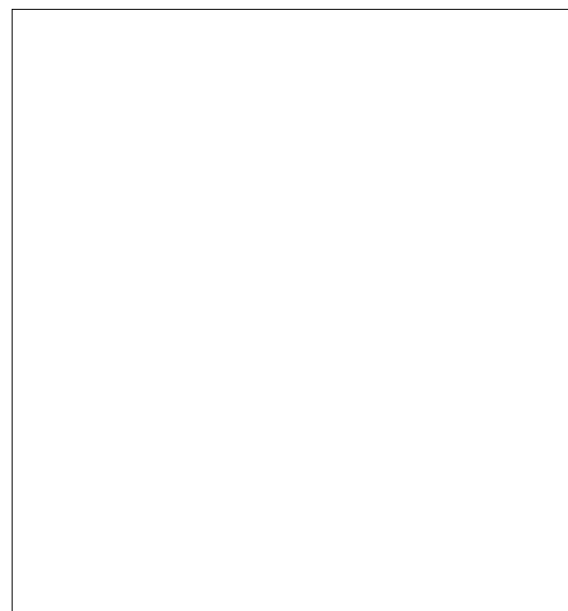
And at higher points of struggle, when revolutions shake capitalism, workers' organisations become places that organise resistance, but also start to organise society.

A socialist society would be based on organisations like these, where democratic planning of production would take place, rather than capitalism's irrational and chaotic production driven by profit.

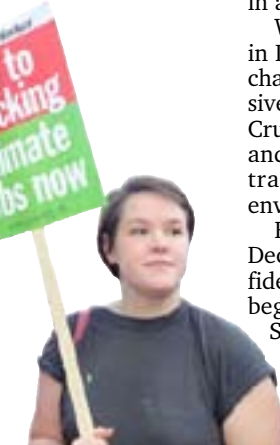
In this sense, socialism is far from the top down, centralised, totalitarian regimes that described themselves as Communist but had an appalling environmental and social record.

At the heart of socialism is the idea of workers' control of production—something that didn't exist in the Soviet Union under Stalin and afterwards.

Marx and Engels also argued that under capitalism humanity had become alienated from the natural world. Healing this



The Great Barrier Reef is being damaged by the coal industry (top) Protests in the US stopped a huge fracking pipeline (above)



"metabolic rift" would require a revolution to transform social relations between people and to remake our relationship with the natural world.

Nature would cease to be understood in terms of its importance to production, but in a more sustainable way.

When the politicians meet in December to discuss climate change we must organise massive protests demanding action. Crucially we must draw further and deeper links between the trade union movement and environmental activists.

Big demonstrations in December can give further confidence to a movement that can begin to fight for real change.

Saving the planet for future generations means fighting for an alternative to capitalism.

READ MORE

● **Land and Labour** by Martin Empson £13.99

● **Marxism and Ecology** by Martin Empson £1.50

● **This Changes Everything** by Naomi Klein £20.00

● **What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism** by John Bellamy Foster £12.99

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FOCUS ON ISRAEL

Election result lays bare a rotten, racist society

The Israeli right's victory will lead to more brutal attacks—and means we have to step up our solidarity, writes **Nick Clark**

THE RE-ELECTION of Binyamin Netanyahu's right wing Likud party last week clearly showed how the Israeli state relies on racism and brutality against Palestinians.

Racism and promising to ramp up aggression against Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza were central to Likud's election campaign. Rabe Ghbariyeh is a Palestinian student activist in Tel Aviv. He told *Socialist Worker* that the racism in Israel meant that Likud's victory came as no shock.

"Palestinians are not very surprised by the result," he said. "Of course we are disappointed."

"But the Israeli people are very right wing and very racist. So we were not hoping that things would turn out differently."

In the days running up to the election Netanyahu promised to expand illegal Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem.

Attacks

He also said, "Anyone who is going to establish a Palestinian state, anyone who is going to evacuate territories today, is simply giving a base for attacks to radical Islam against Israel."

The election result was expected to be a close call between Likud and Zionist Union, an alliance between the Israeli Labour Party and the liberal Hatnuah party.

But in the end Likud won by a considerable margin.

Its strategy proved successful, because racism towards Arabs and the oppression of Palestinians are integral to Israeli society.

So a victory for Zionist Union is often presented as being a more preferable outcome for the Palestinians.

Rather than focusing on attacking Palestinians, the Zionist Union tried to fight the election on social and

ISRAELI LEADER Binyamin Netanyahu (left)

BACK STORY

Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu's right wing Likud party was re-elected last week

● His campaign was based on racism and more attacks on Gaza and the West Bank

● The result shows the need for international solidarity with Palestinians

● Activists are campaigning for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel For more information go to bdsmovement.net

economic issues inside Israel.

They are described as "dovish" because they say they would be willing to continue talks with the Palestinian Authority.

But Rabe explained, "We don't think that Zionist Union is left wing. They're also racists—they said they wouldn't form a government with any of the Arab parties."

Last month the Labour Party and Zionist Union head Isaac Herzog criticised Netanyahu for being



Zionist Union isn't left wing. It's racist and won't work with Arab parties

"weak" against Hamas. Yet Netanyahu tried to crush the resistance group during last summer's assault on Gaza.

More than 20 years of "peace talks" since the 1993 Oslo Accords have not brought the Palestinians any closer to freedom.

Pressure

This is US president Barack Obama's preferred strategy. Under US pressure, Netanyahu was forced to retreat from his total opposition to a Palestinian state after the election.

But Netanyahu's belligerence exposes the true purpose of the Israeli occupation. And US imperialism still needs a powerful ally in the region.

Rabe said, "From one point of view things are getting worse so they can get better in the future. The election result reveals the truth of Israeli society."

His opinion is echoed by Palestinian commentator Ali Abunimah. He wrote that "Netanyahu's re-election is like the 'nutrition facts' label on a box of junk food—it tells you about the toxic ingredients inside".

Likud's re-election won't automatically lead to increased resistance to Israel.

But Netanyahu's victory highlights the fact that Israeli society is rotten to the core.

It shows why we have to step up the fight against Palestinian oppression.

And the hundreds of thousands that marched in solidarity with Gaza last summer are a basis to do that.

Cleaners revolt over conditions

by **RAYMIE KIERNAN**

A SMALL revolt is beginning at a clutch of London's universities as migrant workers fight to improve their terms and conditions.

Staff at the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS), London School of Economics, King's College London, University College London and University of East London (UEL) are fighting back.

Carlos is a Unison union cleaners' rep at UEL. He told Socialist Worker, "We are on the London Living Wage but we want to improve our conditions."

"There are about 60 of us across the Stratford and Docklands campuses on short term contracts and we do not get paid during the holidays."

Many have drawn confidence from last year's cleaners' campaign against outsourcing giant ISS at the School of Oriental and African Studies (Soas) in central London.

"Soas are an inspiration to us," said Carlos. "First they won the London Living Wage then improved sick pay, pensions and holidays. We want to learn from them."

But he said it was important



Cleaners protest outside the School of Oriental and African Studies

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

to keep up the solidarity as ISS is trying to claw back the Soas cleaners' gains. Up to 100 joined a protest there last week.

Workers say ISS wants to bar current Soas cleaners from applying for any new vacancies because they want to employ new staff on worse contracts.

They also say they must be

fluent in English. While Soas management say this is untrue, workers are demanding the company puts it in writing.

Consuelo has been a leading figure in the struggle at Soas and is a Unison rep.

She told Socialist Worker, "Soas cleaners are very experienced at their jobs and ISS has no excuse

not to offer positions to them.

"The company is discriminating against us and trying to intimidate and divide us."

The cleaners are determined to continue their fight. That spirit is infecting other workplaces.

Stefano is a cleaner at RCS. He told Socialist Worker, "We clean lots of rooms that they hire out to

businesses for events and parties, as well as a hotel attached to the college. They only pay us the minimum wage."

He said they work many unsocial hours. "We have to do it because we need the money."

Stefano said they have built the union from just four members last August to a group of 22 cleaners and domestic workers. Now they are demanding the London Living Wage, sick pay and holiday pay at Christmas.

The Soas struggle has become a beacon of what is possible. And it exposes the lie that migrants drive down wages.

Consuelo said, "It's great others are inspired by our fight. They came to support us, now we are going to support their fight."

Unison union organiser Ezequiel Kramer told Socialist Worker, "The workers are starting to realise that this is about a class struggle and are looking beyond nationalities."

"They can see they have a shared interest in linking with other groups of workers fighting for justice at work and the possibility it can be done if they fight."

Some workers' names have been changed

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'WE'VE JUST GOT TO TAKE A STAND'

Striking refuse lorry drivers in east London spoke to **Tomáš Tengely-Evans** about their fight to defend a public service from the cuts and the local council's plans to slash their wages

REFUSE LORRY drivers in Barking and Dagenham in east London are fighting council plans to cut their pay by £1,000 a year.

Workers walked out for three days last week from Wednesday to Friday, and plan two more strike days for the 7 and 8 April.

The strikers also have serious concerns about not having enough time to carry out safety checks on their lorries.

Two recent high profile crashes in Glasgow and Bath involving bin lorries left a total of ten people dead. They highlight the importance of maintaining safety checks.

The refuse workers are required to carry out "pre start" checks on their vehicles every morning.

They say this should take around half an hour. But they are being given as little as 15 minutes.

"There's no way you can check it in 15 minutes—it's undermining the health and safety of people on the street," said James.

Pressure

"We're expected to check everything in that time—from every button to the tire pressure," explained Damian. "But we weren't even given the tools to check the pressure, so you've got to do it by hand."

Jacob said, "Sometimes you've just got to kick the tire."

Joseph added, "In the mornings it's dark and there aren't any lights. I've had to use the torch on my phone."

The council said it "fully recognises the importance of the safety check".

But Damian said, "It takes at least nine minutes to fill in the log books



ON THE picket line at Frizlands Lane depot

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

alone. I've been on the job 20 years—I know it, they don't."

While workloads are going up, pay and conditions are going down.

Damian said, "We're bending over backwards to do our jobs. How many bins do we have to collect from in a run—1,500?"

"That's about a 10-mile walk along with the truck," added a striker. "We'd only get half done if management had us follow their rules."

"We shouldn't have to work like

this these days," said Declan.

This is the same story for refuse and recycling workers across Britain.

Workers in Sheffield walked out on indefinite strike last November over pay, terms and conditions, and allegations of management bullying.

Declan explained, "They've already cut us down from the unsocial hours. It means we're more or less working the weekend like we do the week."

Steve said, "Morale has hit rock bottom. Lots of guys are looking for

other jobs." The dispute is part of the battle across Britain against councils slashing jobs and public services.

Barking and Dagenham council claims it has to slash £54 million during the next three years.

But workers aren't taking it anymore. "Everyone is fed up with the cuts," said Declan.

Ed agreed, "They keep cutting our money. We've had enough—sometimes you've just got to take a stand."

Workers' names have been changed

Support this crucial dispute

THE ATTACK from bosses has provoked a solid reaction from the workers.

"We're serious about making management back off—it's not a token one day action," said one worker.

Steve said, "The strike is rock solid—pretty much everyone is out."

Declan said, "We have to fight now—you have to fight at the beginning."

"What's next otherwise? They'll only want more and they will keep coming for us."

"Losing £1,000 would



Bin lorries out of action

cripple some of the young lads. I've only got a couple of years left until retirement, but they've got mortgages and kids to look after.

"But I'll always stand with them."

Every trade unionist needs to get behind the strikers.

It's a part of the fight against council cuts—a major battleground in the campaign against austerity.

When they strike again in April, we need to show them full solidarity.

Send messages of support to gmb@gmbbarkingb10.org.uk

Security guards and police patrol the picket lines

IN ONE of several letters to workers, the council warned that "the strike will be managed as robustly as possible".

It added, "Any unknown picketers should be reported to your manager."

During the first day of the strike a police riot van sporadically drove past the depot and went into the yard.

Security guards dressed head to toe in black patrolled the periphery.

They would sometimes take the dogs to the park

opposite the picket lines. But workers said it was really about trying to intimidate them.

"We've never had this before when we've been on strike," said one worker.

Action

Socialist Worker has seen a letter management sent to workers before the strike with "questions and answers" about the action.

"They detailed how they were going to handle the strike," said Jacob "and that included them



Security guard passes picket

putting in CCTV cameras". The letter says this would be "deployed for the duration of the strike period at key locations for crime and disorder reasons".

It also made clear that "no overtime will be paid to clear any backlog" and that there's "no service for Good Friday or Easter Monday which means no overtime for those two days will be available".

This has led workers to allege bullying behaviour by the refuse bosses.

Damian said, "It's the

management bullying that people are really fed up with. They can't stand anyone who speaks up to them."

Jacob also explained that the workers' GMB union office is also under threat.

"We've got our union offices in the Frizlands Learning Centre that's on site in our depot. But now they're trying to move it."

It's clear that it will take solid action to beat management back—but workers are confident and up for the fight.

IN BRIEF

East Sussex refuse strikes called off

THE GMB union has called off a series of planned walkouts by refuse and recycling workers in East Sussex.

Workers were set to strike on Thursday and Friday of last week and again for two days this week.

The action was called off to allow bosses "more time to address workforce concerns".

The dispute is over health and safety and allegations of management bullying.

Vigil against plans to shut down centre

HUNDREDS OF people gathered outside Dagenham Civic Centre on Thursday of last week for a vigil to protest against its planned closure.

Some 550 people work at the civic centre.

Council bosses want to shut it down as part of £54 million budget cuts.

Susan Aitouaziz

Anniversary event for Justice4Bolton

ON FRIDAY of last week anti-fascist activists marked five years since the Unite Against Fascism demo against the English Defence League in Bolton.

In 2010 police arrested 60 anti-fascists.

Justice campaigners gathered in Victoria Square to hold up photos showing police actions on the day.

Meeting debates Ukraine and Nato

UP TO 300 people attended a Stop the War Coalition public meeting in London on Nato and the crisis in Ukraine on Thursday of last week.

The meeting agreed that the main task is to oppose US and British imperialism.

Both governments are ramping up tensions by sending military aid and advisors to Ukraine.

Activists also debated Russia's role.

Appeal date set for rep Clara Osagiede

RMT UNION cleaners' rep Clara Osagiede's appeal against her sacking is set to take place on 15 April.

The union has pledged full backing for her reinstatement.

Arrest as activists target bosses

BLACKLIST Support Group secretary Dave Smith was arrested at a blockade of London's Park Lane on Wednesday of last week.

Workers were protesting at the Construction Awards.

Protesters also blocked Oxford Street on Friday of last week.

It was part of the campaign against the sacking of a worker on the Crossrail project for raising health and safety concerns.

EDUCATION



COLLEGE WORKERS and students during a lobby of parliament last week PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

Students join lobby to stop education cuts

by SADIE ROBINSON

AROUND 200 college students and workers lobbied parliament on Wednesday of last week. They were protesting against cuts of up to 24 percent to adult education funding.

Many were students learning English. Momtaz Badrun is studying English for Speakers of Other Languages (Esol) at Tower Hamlets College in east London.

She told Socialist Worker, "They're pushing us to learn

English and get a job.

"But these cuts will affect so many adults in education. We need to stop that.

"Learning English is very important. If we don't, we can't communicate with our children or the doctor."

Rejaul Karim Mintu also studies at Tower Hamlets. "I need to learn to speak English to find a job," he told Socialist Worker.

Student Arman added, "We need a better future."

Jaishree Patel teaches Esol at Lambeth College in south London.

"These cuts are telling people that after the age of 19 they don't count anymore," she told Socialist Worker.

"But everyone should have a right to education. This is supposed to be the West but people are being treated as if they are in a third world country.

"Why do we have principals being paid £150,000 a year? Give it to our students."

●March against adult education cuts – assemble 6pm, Wednesday 25 March, City Lit, Keely St, London WC2B 4BA

EDUCATION ROUND-UP

■UCU UNION members at Dundee University are balloting for industrial action against a threatened 32 compulsory redundancies of academic staff. The ballot ends on 13 April. ●Send messages of support to ducu@dundee.ac.uk

■UCU UNION members at Greenwich Community College in south east London were set to strike on Friday of this week. They voted by 94 percent for strikes in a recent ballot.

The new temporary principal has refused to backtrack on new contracts.

They would increase the working week by two hours, cut holidays by two weeks, and carry out unannounced teaching observations.

●Pickets from 8am at the main site on Plumstead Rd, Nearest station Woolwich Arsenal. Send messages of support to lynne.windeatt@btinternet.com

■A STRIKE ballot at the University of Salford ends

on Friday of this week. UCU union members were balloted for action after two union members were sacked and refused any appeal.

■A PROTEST against the closure of the foundation art and design course at the University of South Wales took place on Friday of last week.

The course gave people with no qualifications access to further education.

Bosses plan to end teaching in 2016.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Unison leadership criticised over pay deal

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

OVER 500 Unison union members debated their leadership's role in last year's rotten local government pay deal at a special one-day conference on Tuesday of this week.

Union leaders in England and Wales cobbled the deal together with the Labour leadership of the council employers.

They suspended strikes for a two-year deal little better than the 1 percent pay offer that was overwhelmingly rejected.

Workers were furious that it left many worse off.

Where Unison branches fought for rejection of the deal they won the argument.

It was a revolt of members that forced Tuesday's special conference, only the second in Unison's history.

Well over the third of

branches required backed the call for the conference.

There was substantial opposition from the conference floor with delegates angry over the union's failure to lead a real fight over pay.

Over 40 percent opposed an early leadership motion.

As Socialist Worker went to press the vote on reopening negotiations and fighting for a better pay deal was unclear.

No to academies in Brent

TEACHERS AT St Andrew and St Francis School in Brent, west London, began a two-day strike on Tuesday of this week.

The workers, in the NUT and ATL unions, are fighting to stop the school becoming a forced academy.

The action follows a successful strike on Wednesday of last week.

Local NUT member Stefan Simms, who is a member of the NUT's national executive committee, visited pickets.

"The mood was good and the picket line was big for a primary school," he told Socialist Worker. "Support staff said they wanted to be on strike too."



Strikers oppose academies

ATL secretary Hank Roberts said a consultation over the academy plan was a "farce". Parents have organised a petition against the plan.

●Send messages of support to hankr@hotmail.com and lesley18g@gmail.com

STUDENTS



Students marching through LSE last week

No fees, no cuts—Occupy!

STUDENTS OCCUPIED two London universities last week to stop course cuts and to demand free education.

Protesters at the London School of Economics (LSE) occupied on Tuesday of last week and demanded LSE bosses lobby the government to scrap tuition fees.

On Thursday of last week University of the Arts London (UAL) students went into occupation at Central Saint Martin's campus against course and possible job cuts.

Up to 300 people marched through the LSE campus last week then crammed into an occupation meeting. And over

100 people attended a public meeting at UAL on Monday of this week.

Victimised PCS union rep Candy Udwin spoke on the strikes against privatisation at the National Gallery.

UAL students' union president Shelly Asquith told Socialist Worker, "The occupation has been going really well. And it's getting bigger—lots of students and staff have come along."

Both occupations were set to march from 2pm at LSE to the London College of Communication on Wednesday of this week.

Nick Clark

TRANSPORT ROUND-UP

■A BALLOT of 17,000 RMT union members at Network Rail was set to be announced as Socialist Worker went to press.

They are voting on whether to accept a four-year deal that includes a pay cut. There is also no commitment against compulsory redundancies past the end of 2015.

■RMT MEMBERS on London Midland trains called off a strike on Monday of this week after "complete victory and vindication" of Steve Caldwell.

Steve was victimised after raising safety issues.

He will now return to work, receive an apology from London Midland and compensation for any loss of earnings.

■UNITE UNION members at five Abellio bus depots in London are set to ballot for strikes after bosses reneged on the second year of two-year pay deal.

Drivers at Battersea, Beddington, Hayes, Twickenham and Walworth depots voted by 528 to 12 for strikes in a recent consultative ballot.

Meanwhile at Metroline bosses are attempting to force through new contracts and at Tower Transit workers are resisting attacks on the union. Union reps are set to meet on Friday of this week.

■BUS DRIVERS at First in Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster are balloting for strikes over pay. The workers rejected bosses' offer of a pay freeze this year.

MANUFACTURING WORKERS

A refreshing victory sees bosses bottle it

by DAVE SEWELL

STRIKING WORKERS in Bridgwater, Somerset, have stopped an attack on their terms and conditions at fruit juice manufacturer Refresco Gerber.

Unite union branch secretary David Jeffs told Socialist Worker, "This is a massive victory for Unite and the Refresco Gerber juice workers. It feels great to win when so many said we couldn't."

After a raft of attacks on their conditions, workers in the Unite union took a series of 36-hour strikes.

They were out to defend their sick pay entitlement, their pay protection for workers moved onto different shifts and their six-day shift pattern.

They called off planned further strikes after bosses blinked first this week, with a new offer responding to all three demands.

Strike

Strikers spoke to Socialist Worker on the picket line last week. Steve said, "At first they were just saying 'Go on and have your strike then'."

"Now they're having to talk because it's affecting them. We've got a huge warehouse, and it's as empty as I've ever seen it."



FIGHTING THE squeeze in Somerset

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

The last strike at the company was more than 50 years ago, but workers' morale was repeatedly boosted by solidarity from other workers.

Local people, including complete strangers, have come to the picket line with cakes, beers and bags full of shopping.

Postal workers brought £450 they'd raised in a whip-round.

"It's really heartwarming,"

said Steve. "You can be out here and feel rotten, so it's absolutely fantastic to get that support because then you know you're not alone."

Steve thought the workers' fight had struck a chord because so many others are facing similar attacks.

He said, "Everyone's being squeezed, when you look at conditions or at pay."

Gary said, "We'll never know how much they could

have taken off us down the line if we hadn't shown we could galvanise the workforce and stand up for ourselves."

"The bosses' attitude is that we should be grateful just to have the job, that we can't stick up for our rights. But that's not how it is at all."

Some workers' names have been changed. Read Socialist Worker's report from the picket line bit.ly/1bpLITs

Meet a TUSC candidate

Maxine Bowler Brightside and Hillsborough

THE TRADE Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) is standing parliamentary candidates in May's general election.

Maxine Bowler is the candidate for Brightside and Hillsborough in Sheffield. She explained to Socialist Worker why she was standing.

She said, "Austerity is pounding the poorest people—and Brightside and Hillsborough is one of the poorest constituencies in the country."

"It has more people with health problems, more people on benefits—and more people being sanctioned."

Maxine said it's important to stand as a left alternative.

"Labour's candidate Harry Harpham was New Labour minister David Blunkett's election agent and deputy leader of the council."

"He said there are 8,000 people on the housing waiting list."

"I don't know where the rest have gone because the list was much bigger than that."

She said a housing crisis had developed in Sheffield on his watch. He is cabinet member for homes and neighbourhoods.

"The council demolished 8,000 homes. It said if they did this then private contractors would come in. Of course, that's not happened. Now there's a housing crisis in the city."

Maxine's campaign offers a different type of politics.

"I'm quite well-known in the community, around the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War. And I'm known as someone who stands up to Islamophobia."

She added, "Lots of people have slid off the electoral register—and many were never on it in the first place because they think all politicians stink."

"People feel that politics is just about people with money and power. TUSC

candidates have to be ordinary people, who understand the lives of ordinary people."



Maxine Bowler

HOUSING

Sweets Way resists eviction

CAMPAIGNERS IN north London held a victory march on Barnett County Court on Monday of this week after a judge postponed a hearing to evict them.

Tenants are occupying empty homes on the Sweets Way estate in protest at

evictions. They were boosted last week when celebrity activist Russell Brand joined the continuing occupation.

Former Sweets Way tenants have been forced to move out of the borough or into precarious accommodation.

●sweetswayresists.wordpress.com

UNION ELECTION

Back Billy Hayes in CWU general secretary election

BALLOT PAPERS for the CWU union general secretary election were mailed out to members this week.

Billy Hayes is standing for re-election against current deputy general secretary Dave Ward. Socialist Worker is supporting Billy Hayes.

Neither candidate has offered a fighting leadership. Many CWU members will be attracted by Ward's claims to stand up for workers and not act as a "liaison officer for the Labour Party".

This is welcome talk from a potential union leader.

But like Hayes, Ward has overseen attacks on CWU members' pay and conditions.

As the deputy general secretary for post, he is responsible for the

privatisation sellout in 2013.

CWU leaders threw away a strong strike vote for a deal that saw the selloff of Royal Mail go ahead.

Hayes is also responsible for the sellout. But he has shown commitment to supporting political initiatives such as the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop the War and Unite Against Fascism.

It is important for trade unions to give a lead on broader political issues.

And support at the top makes organising politically in local branches and workplaces easier.

Whoever wins, activists will have to build resistance to attacks on wages and conditions from the ground up. The ballot ends 14 April.

OFFSHORE WORKERS

Strike threat for oil bosses

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

THOUSANDS OF offshore workers in the North Sea oil and gas industry could soon be drilling into the bosses' profits.

There is a battle on to see who will pay for the drop in the price of oil.

Consultative ballots of 3,000 GMB and Unite union members in the Offshore Contractor Association for strikes were set to close on Friday of this week.

Bosses use the oil price drop as an excuse to attack their conditions. Workers are furious at changes to shift patterns and cuts to pension payments, sick pay and holiday leave.

And Tory chancellor George Osborne's £1.3 billion budget tax break for the oil barons will only fuel resentment.

Offshore worker Ian told Socialist Worker, "Osborne's tax cuts will go straight into the bosses' pocket as workers

conditions are attacked, if they still have a job." Oil workers' union Oilc, now part of the RMT, is also set to ballot its 5,000 members for industrial action.

It cited a range of issues including shift pattern changes, alterations to leave entitlements, reductions of up to 20 percent in staff, and disputes on sick pay, pensions and pay.

RMT is looking to coordinate with the other offshore unions.

Bosses want even more and are threatening the jobs of up to 40,000 workers.

Ian said, "We have to fight this. Otherwise it's just a green light for further attacks."

Thousands of offshore catering workers have also had a 2 percent pay rise for 2015 to 2016 cancelled. Unite and RMT are now set to ballot 2,000 members over the issue.

●Ian's name has been changed

FIRE AND RESCUE



Emergency control staff on the picket line

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Essex strikers lobby MPs

EMERGENCY control staff from Essex lobbied MPs at parliament over attacks on their working conditions on Wednesday of last week.

The lobby coincided with the end of a nine-day strike over a new shift system that extends the working day from nine to 12 hours.

The workers in the FBU union are also angry at a new computer system which is constantly crashing.

They are sick of getting the blame for its problems.

Riccardo la Torre, Essex FBU chair, said, "It was fantastic today seeing our control staff take their case directly to parliament."

"They didn't come across a single MP who didn't offer their support. It's a pity councillors on the fire authority haven't yet met their own employees themselves."

Annette Mackin

BULLYING NHS BOSSSES BLAMED

by TOMÁŠ TENGEĽY-EVANS

HEALTH WORKERS are furious with bosses at the Barts Health NHS Trust in east London for running Whipps Cross Hospital into the ground.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) watchdog delivered a damning report into the hospital and placed it in “special measures”.

The report said “there were delays in patients being assessed and in handovers taking place for patients who arrived by ambulance”. Some received “sub optimal care”.

Unison union member and occupational therapist Sam told Socialist Worker in a personal capacity, “This time the CQC is blaming management.”

“It means we’ve been vindicated about what we’ve been saying for the last couple of years.”

The report found a “culture of bullying and harassment” and that “morale was low” among the workforce.

Sam said, “We warned them about the bullying, the job cuts and down banding workers.”

The report found that “the



STAFF AT Whipps Cross and their supporters protested against PFI and the cuts in 2013

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

decision in 2013 to remove 22 posts across the trust and down band several hundred more nursing staff has had a significant impact on moral and stretched staffing levels across all services”.

In 2010 the CQC was

satisfied with the hospitals and all four had a combined deficit of £8 million. Barts Health’s deficit for this year alone stands at £93 million.

Sam explained how the hospital mergers, cuts and the ballooning Private

Finance Initiative (PFI) debt caused the crisis.

No sooner was Barts Health formed in 2012 through merging four east London health trusts, then bosses began pushing through millions of pounds in cuts to “save” money.

“Lots of people left,” said Sam. “Others didn’t get their jobs back when they’d had to reapply because of down banding and reorganisation.”

“This led to low staffing and some wards staffed by agency workers.

Health bosses were pushing through cuts because the trust was haemorrhaging money to the PFI debt.

Carol Saunders from the People vs. Barts Health PFI campaign told Socialist Worker, “The trust is trying to balance an unsustainable debt, with PFI repayments of £2.4 million a week.”

Workers held a meeting last week to discuss the next steps with the local health campaigns.

They agreed the PFI debt must be dropped, and Whipps Cross bosses must stop cutting, re-band workers and immediately reinstate victimised Unison union rep Charlotte Monro.

There is still a mood to fight around the NHS.

Fifty Bangladeshi parents and families with disabled children marched in east London on Monday of this week against Barts Health’s cut to their parent advisor service. And hospital porters in Dundee struck on Friday of last week as part of an ongoing pay dispute.

Every trade unionist and campaigner needs to fight to broaden the resistance.

National Gallery workers exhibit five-day strike

WORKERS AT the National Gallery in London began a five-day walkout against privatisation on Tuesday of this week.

The PCS union members have already struck for 12 days this year over plans to privatise 400 out of 600 jobs.

It was announced last week that art curator Gabriele Finaldi will take over as director of the gallery in August.

One striker told Socialist Worker, “You’d hope he’d put a stop to it—if he doesn’t, it’s terrible.”

Workers at the gallery are not even paid the London Living Wage. Many have been forced to take second jobs.



Pickets in Trafalgar Square

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

“It was a really nice place to work—now it’s a different place altogether,” said one striker.

Bosses suspended PCS rep Candy Udwin before the first five-day walkout in January.

“It’s dreadful,” explained one striker. “But we are supporting Candy—she has been brilliant. It only makes you even angrier about what they are doing.”

The tendering process

is set for just before the general election. Workers are calling on the Labour Party to come out in opposition to the plans.

Strikers organised a people’s inquiry into the National Gallery at parliament on Tuesday of this week. They plan to go on speaking tours on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

A national day of action is also planned for Thursday—and strikers are asking for supporters to take part in solidarity action. **Annette Mackin**

Information about donating to the strike fund and inviting strikers to speak can be found at ngnotforsale.wordpress.com

Barnet chooses a walkout

UNISON union members at Your Choice Barnet (YCB) in north London were set to begin a three-day strike on Wednesday of this week against a 9.5 percent pay cut.

It will bring the number of strike days since the dispute began at the council-controlled care firm to 11.

A third of jobs have gone since workers stopped being directly employed by the council.

A recent Care Quality Commission inspection report found YCB’s service for adults with disabilities to be “inadequate”. It is a

damning judgement on the Tories’ mass outsourcing programme of local services in Barnet.

One parent told the council’s Adults and Safeguarding Committee last week that they were “fearful” for the future and attacked the council’s “ill thought out” and “deeply flawed” business plan for YCB.

They demanded, “Either fund YCB properly or bring the service back in-house.”

Send messages of support to contactus@barnetunison.org.uk
Send strike fund donations to Barnet Unison Industrial Action Fund, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP